

COMPLETE WORKS OF SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

VOLUME IV



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CONTENTS

LIFE BEYOND DEATH

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Page</i>
PREFACE	3
CHAPTER I: Modern Science and Higher Spiritualism	29
CHAPTER II: Does the Soul Exist after Death	34
CHAPTER III: The Scientific View of Death	50
CHAPTER IV: The Soul after Death	64
CHAPTER V: Rebirth of the Soul	75
CHAPTER VI: The Soul and Its Destiny	88
CHAPTER VII: Pre-existence and Reincarnation	95
CHAPTER VIII: Pre-existence and Immortality	109
CHAPTER IX: Science and Immortality	117
CHAPTER X: The Spiritualism	130
CHAPTER XI: Spiritualism and Vedanta	144
CHAPTER XII: Spiritualism and Ancestor-worship	159
CHAPTER XIII: The Spiritualistic Mediumship	168
CHAPTER XIV: The Automatic Slate-writing	177
CHAPTER XV: What is There Beyond the Grave	181
CHAPTER XVI: Questions and Answers	200
Appendix A	204
Appendix B	209
Appendix C	212
Appendix D	217
Appendix E	227
Appendix F	235

SCIENCE OF PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

PREFACE	243
CHAPTER I: The Psychic Phenomena	253
CHAPTER II: The Prana and the Healing Power	264
CHAPTER III: The Magnetic Healing	271
CHAPTER IV: I. Science of Mental Healing	275

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Page</i>
II The Spiritual Healing	285
III Healing by Discarnate Spirit ...	295
CHAPTER V: Science of Perfect Health ...	299
APPENDIX : Science of Mystery ...	315

THE MYSTERY OF DEATH

PREFACE	219
CHAPTER I:	INTRODUCTION	...	339
CHAPTER II:	The Ruler of Death	...	356
CHAPTER III:	Death and Immortality	...	371
CHAPTER IV:	The Abode of Death	...	383
CHAPTER V:	The Changeable and the Unchangeable	...	397
CHAPTER VI:	The Knowledge of the Absolute	...	412
CHAPTER VII:	The Ego and the True Self	...	426
CHAPTER VIII:	Ego, Self and Sensation	...	437
CHAPTER IX:	The Divine Element in Us	...	452
CHAPTER X:	The Immortal Self	...	466
CHAPTER XI:	The Realm of Immortality	...	476
CHAPTER XII:	Unity in Variety	...	488
CHAPTER XIII:	The Body and the Soul	...	503
CHAPTER XIV:	Perfection of the Soul	...	516
CHAPTER XV:	Oneness Amidst the Manifold	...	529
CHAPTER XVI:	The Phenomenal Universe and the Brahman	...	543
CHAPTER XVII:	The World as the Result of Vibrations	...	555
CHAPTER XVIII:	End of Worldliness Means the Beginning of Realization	...	568
CHAPTER XIX:	Realization of the Absolute	...	582

LIFE BEYOND DEATH

PREFACE

Unlike many of the books on spiritualism, the present work has a special feature and beauty of its own. Its pages do not narrate the chief legends and tales of the departed spirits and the wandering ghosts and also of the supernatural beings of the unknown etherial sphere, as one in most cases finds in such books that claim to unveil the mystery of the world beyond the grave, but the treatment of the chapters of this book is purely a scientific and rational one, and it has taken a new and novel departure from the prevailing methods and systems of the presentation of this subject.

Swami Abhedananda delivered from time to time a number of lectures on spiritualism in response to the invitations from many institutions like the Free Religious Association of America, The Psychical Research Society of America, the American Institute of Science, etc. The Swami was once the President of the Psychical Research Society of America. He was also well-acquainted with the leading scientists, spiritualists, mediums and spirit-communicators, during his long stay in America. He had many personal experiences about the departed spirits, seances, spirit-communications and other subjects of spiritualism, but he believed that most of the spirits are earth-bound, as they are not free from desires and passions. Regarding the mediums, he has said that in most cases, the mediums are deprived of their mental and physical powers. Regarding the seances, the Swami is of opinion that though the departed spirits communicate with the seance-holders and with the near and dear ones of them, and furnish informations of their earthly and etherial worlds, yet, in most cases, it has been found that all the informations and talks, received from them, are not genuine or correct. So the Swami says that everything of the spirits should be examined with logical and scientific mind.

Regarding this present work, it can be said that it is absolutely free from prejudices and blindly biased views. It is a critical study of the science and practice of spiritualism with impartial or dispassionate views. It has shown wisely and

ably the merits and the demerits and also the bright and dark sides of the fact and science of spiritualism. At the same time the learned Swami has clearly solved all the controversial points and problems of the theory of birth and rebirth of the souls, existence and pre-existence of the souls, and immortality and eternality of the souls. In short, all the knotty problems of spiritualism or spiritism have been clearly explained and solved by this philosopher-saint in the chapters of this book with remarkable characteristics of his own.

It can be said that Swami Abhedananda has neither blindly uphold, nor has totally denied or rejected the facts of the aspects of spiritualism. As for example, the Swami has said: "Although many of the professional mediums have been pitifully exposed as frauds, still there are genuine mediums and authentic manifestations which cannot be explained by telepathy or any other theory than that of the communications of the discarnate spirits. On many cases the audience is deceived by the earth-bound spirits. The manifestations on the material plane, such as the table turning, the rapping knocks of the spirits, are ordinarily understood by spiritualism, but all such phenomena belong to the lower class of spiritualism or spiritism, as it is called by many. Spiritism can only satisfy our curiosity and does not explain any of our vital questions. But true spiritualism should be distinguished from that phase which is called spiritism. Higher spiritualism, therefore, is the name for that which starting from the belief in a life after death, reveals the nature of the soul and its relation to God".

Further the Swami has said: "Within the last fifty years modern spiritualism has given wonderful demonstrations regarding the existence of the disembodied spirits who continue to live even after the dissolution of their gross material forms. It has brought comfort and consolation to the hearts of many people, who were suffering from the evil effects of scepticism and unbelief, concerning the future life, caused by the dry theories of the atheistic, agnostic, and materialistic thinkers of the last century". But it is true, the Swami says that though the disembodied spirits satisfy some of the curiosities of the questioning people, yet they cannot do any real good or they cannot help in any way in the path of spiritual progress. As for example, the Swami says: "The genuine phenomena

of spiritism may do some good in the way of satisfying the curiosity of certain people or of bringing the assurance that there is a life after death. They may foretell some petty, trivial events in connection with our business or daily life, but they cannot bring to us the highest wisdom and happiness which come to the soul through Divine communion. These spirits are not the angels, as the spiritualism may encourage the hope of meeting the departed spirits of our friends and relatives, and may bring consolation in the mind of these that doubt their existence, but it cannot give us the realization of the absolute Truth, or the attainment of Godconsciousness”.

Swami Abhedananda, being a true philosopher and a man of realization, has surveyed everything of spiritualism or spiritism from the viewpoint of logic, reasoning, and science. He says that death is inevitable for all the living beings, and they are involved in the cycle of birth and death, until they realize their immortal soul or *Atman*. Spiritualism is only an open passage for receiving the informations of the existence and pre-existence of the soul and also of their eternality and immortality, but it cannot assure anyone to confer upon him the blessings of knowledge of the absolute Brahman.

The Swami says that when a man passes from this material plane, he lives in the mental plane, and does everything through his mind with the impressions (*samskaras*) of the works he performed in the material plane and also with the countless impressions that are hoarded in the subconscious lair of the mind. The departed soul as if sleeps there in the spirit or mind world, and, regarding this sleep after death, Swami Abhedananda says: “The sleep after death is like the sleep before the birth. Then they (departed souls) have a second sleep before they come to this plane (material plane), they go into the sleep, and gravitate towards proper environment. If I have a strong desire to be the best artist, and if I do not success or pass away before I fulfil my desire, that desire will remain in me even in that soul-slumber. It will sprout again”. Now, from this it is evident that the departed souls are gravitated again and again in this world of desire and fulfilment, because their souls exist and the souls take births until and unless they reach the absolute Truth by cutting asunder the knots of desires and passions. The law of *karma* is pre-

dominant in the lives of all living creatures. They do works in this world of duties and reap their results. Swami Abhedananda says: "So this law of cause and sequence which is called the law of *karma*, does not wait for widow's tears, or orphan's cries. What we have sown, we must reap either on this plane, or in some other realm. So after death we may enjoy the pleasures of our thoughts and deeds in the heavenly regions".

From the law of *karma* it is also proved that our soul is immortal and will not be extinguished after death. But it should be remembered, the Swami says, that the life after death, or the life in this material world, is liable to change and also to the law of cause and sequence. So we shall have to transcend the realm of cause and effect, which is dominated by time and space, the ingredients of nescience or *maya*. And this transcendence is possible only by the realization of our true existence which is the immortal *Atman*.

There are sixteen chapters and five appendices in the book. If we briefly survey on the different chapters, we find that the chapter I has been dealt on "the modern science and the higher spiritualism". In this chapter, the Swami has said that during the last sixty years, spiritualism made a considerable progress, convincing many scientific minds who were earnestly seeking for the truth of man's survival after death. The experimental spiritualism began in America in 1870. For the scientific study of the phenomena of spiritualism, the Psychical Research Society was established in London in 1886, and many savants like Dr. Myers, Frank Podmore, Mr. Home, Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, Prof. William James, Alfred Russell Wallace, Dr. Hedgeson and others were interested in the research work of the science of spirit. Camille Flammarion, W. T. Stead, Prof. Hyslop were also interested in the subject of spiritualism. Swami Abhedananda says that the higher spiritualism is at the root of all great religions of the world, and so the followers of different religions and also different great thinkers devoted their times for discovering some truths in the science and practice of spiritualism.

The chapter II deals with the problem of the existence of the soul after the dissolution of the material body. In this chapter, Swami Abhedananda says that from ancient times,

there existed some belief that the psyche or soul is non-different from the material body, and so after the dissolution of the body, the soul also dies. This faith mainly prevailed among the Charvakas, who were the disciples of Vrihaspati and were out and out materialistic in thinking and doing. Besides them there were dormant questions about the soul among ordinary men, who were generally guided by blind faith. But Swami Abhedananda says that the disbelief in the existence of the soul after death prevails among the modern physiologists, the anatomists, the pathologists and a host of other materialistic and agnostic thinkers. They believe that the combinations of matter produces thought, intelligence, consciousness, mind and soul. "They teach that thought or intelligence or consciousness is nothing but a function of the brain. * * The brain brings into existence the material of consciousness of which our minds consist * *. As the materials of food, after falling into the stomach, change and assume new qualities, so the impressions of the brain are metamorphosed into the ideas, thought, emotion, will, impressions of the face, speech, disposition, etc. through the nerves. Thus thought or soul is the secretion of the brain, and when the brain is gone, the soul cannot exist". The Swami has quoted some lines in support of this materialistic theory from the writings of Buchner, Luys, Percival Lowell, Herbert Spencer, Prof. Clifford, Romanes and others. In fact, the writings of these materialistic thinkers are similar to those of the Charvakas of India. But Vedanta does not admit this theory of the materialists. Swami Abhedananda says that according to Vedanta "knowledge of matter is nothing but the knowledge of that change of mind, of which we are conscious. * * Even our knowledge that the soul, or the mind, is a function of the brain, presupposes the existence of another mind or knower". This another mind or knower is the self or the soul, which is different from the mind and the body, but the substratum or ground of the mind and the body. Dr. Schiller, Immanuel Kant, Fichte, Schelling and others also subscribe the similar view, though David Hume, like the Vijnanavadin Yogachara Buddhists, do not admit it, because according to Hume and the Yogachara Buddhists, the soul is a bundle of sensations or ideas.

Now, Swami Abhedananda has efficiently dealt with the

problem of the existence of the soul after death. He says that the most ancient writers of the vedic ages believed in the spirits of the *Pitris* or the departed fathers. The Egyptians, the Mesopotemians, the Chaldeans and other ancient nations of the world also believed in the 'double' or soul, devoid of the material form. The Hindus believed that after death, the departed souls like in the mental world with the sleeping impressions (*samskaras*) of his desires (*vasanas*) which existed and were not mitigated during life-time. The souls are subject to the cycle of birth and rebirth, until they go beyond the nescience (*ajnana*) and realize their immortal nature. "The Hindus", says the Swami, "do not mean destruction or annihilation by death. They mean by it a change of body, or the form". The *Bhagavad Gita* says that the soul, or the *Atman* is deathless and birthless; it is eternal by its nature. So it is a proved fact that the soul exists after death, and its true nature is the *Atman*, or the Brahman, which is the background of the changing world-appearance.

The chapter III deals with the scientific view of death. In this chapter, Swami Abhedananda says that the mystery of death is not to be solved by mere mythology or mythological beliefs of the ancient people which have been handed down to us through generations, but to be solved by scientific enquiry and investigation. The duty of science is to disclose truths which are genuine and real, and so those who wish to unveil the mystery of the unknown spirit-world, should study the details of spiritualism with a scientific mind. Swami Abhedananda says: "Scientific researches toward tracing the causes of death have brought out many truths and many laws which are unknown to the writers of the Genesis and other scriptures of different nations". But it is a fact that the orthodox science, or the materialistic science, is quite unfit to discover the real truth that is behind spiritualism or spiritism. But it requires an open mind and reason backed by the scientific enquiry into the truth. The Swami has given some instances of the embalming process of the dead bodies of the old Babylonians and Egyptians, and has said that the very process or method proves the existence of the soul beyond the grave. They believed in a 'double' and that means they maintained the belief of pre-existence of the soul. The Indians believe in the indestructi-

bility of the life-force ; and that life-force or *prana* is not the product of any chemical actions of any material thing. It is all-intelligent and all-conscious, and it is the *Atman*, which transcends the cycle of birth and rebirth.

Now, in support of the existence of the soul as the life-force or the life-principle, the Swami has forwarded an argument which is beautiful and very rational. He says: "Thus we see that there are two principal factors in the body: the one is the mind and the other is the vibration of the *prana*, or the vibratory state of the cells and the tissues of the body. But the vibratory state of the cells and the tissues are governed by the mind". In fact, the mind is the director of all the organic functions of the body. But there is another principle which directs also the mind, and that director is the life-force, or the *prana*, or the soul. The Swami says: "It is the individual self-conscious life-force which is called * * the living soul. The living soul means the self-conscious individualized life-force with the sense of 'I', and the sense of 'I' hold them together. This sense of 'I' holds all together, unifies them, and makes the separate parts vibrate and produce a perfect harmony. That harmony is life. * * But advanced science tells us that there is a director and this director has the absolute control over the whole organism. He is the living soul. At the time of death, he disconnects himself from the organs and leaves the body".

The Swami has given in this chapter some interesting information of spiritualism. He says that a fine substance emanates from the body at the time of death. It is luminous, and is called the *ectoplasm*. The French Astronomer, Camille Flammarion has reports about this *ectoplasm* in his famous book, *The Unknown*, and he has said that "this ectoplasm is a substance, which contains finer matter in vibration, and this finer matter forms the under-garment of the soul, and the gross physical body is the outer garment. So we have two bodies: the gross physical body and the finer or etherial body which exists in each one of us". The *ectoplasm* is a vapourlike substance and has no particular form. It is like a cloud and can take a shape or a form and can be photographed says Swami Abhedananda. The disembodied souls or spirits who desire to be materialized and to communicate with the near and dear ones in the phenomenal world, generally take the

help of this *ectoplasm* which remains in the body of everyone. The Swami says: "Our human bodies are emanating that substance all the time. It can be seen especially at the time when there is a medium in a trancelike condition. The materializing mediums emanate that very strongly". In fact, the *ectoplasm* is the under-garment of the soul, and the gross physical body is the outer garment. Now, the Hindu scriptures say that there is also a causal body (*karana-sharira*), which forms the background of the finer or etherial (subtle or *sukshma sharira* and the real soul or the *Atman* is above all these bodies, gross, subtle and causal. The scientific study of spiritualism will disclose this truth.

The chapter IV deals with the soul after death. The Swami has given here many references from the *Upanishads*, *Gita* and other Hindu scriptures. He has said that the Hindus believe that the righteous and good souls pass through the *devayana* or the path of the *devas*, whereas the sinners pass through the *pitriyana* or the path of the departed fathers. The *Upanishad* has described that the departed spirits pass through the principal stages like smoke, night, dark, fifteen days, and each of the departed souls has a spirit as its ruler. Each of these spirits introduces them to the other spirits and thus they go very quickly to their proper destinations. Now, from these references-cum-evidences we come to know that the souls of the living being, exist after death, and come under the sway of the cycle of birth and rebirth until they reach their final shape, the immortal self. Swami Abhedananda says that death means the change of forms. "Death of one form reproduces or gives birth to another form, as death of the seed form produces the free-form and so forth. Again that which is reproduced, will die and then reproduce another and so on".

The chapter V deals with rebirth of the soul. The Swami says: "Rebirth of the soul presupposes its existence as an intelligent entity and it is separable and independent of the gross physical body. By the birth *Atman*, we mean that centre of the self-conscious activity which thinks, reacts on the personal or external phenomena, and consciously performs the functions of life". Regarding rebirth of the soul Swami Abhedananda says that reappearance of the germs of life in gross physical forms, whether animal or human, is called 'mani-

festation', which is known and understood by the theory of rebirth of the soul, or the doctrine of reincarnation, as it is called in the Vedanta philosophy. (Cf. the Swami's book, *Reincarnation*). By rebirth of the soul, Vedanta does not mean the theory of transmigration or metempsychosis which is quite different from the theory of reincarnation. The theory of reincarnation can nicely be explained by the theory of evolution (*abhivyaktivada* or *srishtivada*), as advanced by the Sankhya philosophy or Kapila. The *Sankhya* says that evolution means the projection of something which exist in a seed form. Something cannot come out of nothing. The entire universe comes out from the *Prakriti*, which is the sum total of all the individual soul and all the matter. When the unmanifested form comes out as the manifested form, then we call evolution, or projection, or creation. Vedanta also admits this theory. The soul or the life-force of all the sentient and insentient objects are uncreated and immortal, and it appears with a manifested body from its unmanifested causal form. So rebirth of the soul presupposes the idea of immortality of the soul. Swami Abhedananda has therefore refuted the one-birth theory and the theory of heredity. He says that "the whole human nature must have existed in that germ of life in some form or other".

The chapter VI deals with the soul and its destiny. Swami Abhedananda says: "The souls, which have desires for earthly things, will have to come down to earth. Some souls will remain earthly bound for a certain length of time, say one hundred or a thousand years. * * They will born again. So the destiny of the human soul is determined by the thoughts and desires and tendencies. We create our own destiny by our thoughts and desires and deeds. * * God is not responsible for our conditions. We ourselves are responsible, * *".

The chapter VII deals with the problems of pre-existence and immortality. In this chapter, Swami Abhedananda has forwarded a very strong and unrefutable argument in support of pre-existence, reincarnation and immortality of the soul. The Swami has refuted the theories of heredity and one-birth, as believed by the old Christian theologians, and says that both the theory of heredity and that of one-birth cannot explain or solve the problems of life and death. He says that according

to Vedanta, immortality means the continued existence in the eternal future, whereas pre-existence means the continued existence in the eternal past. "The one cannot exist without the other. Each of these only expresses the one-half of our life which is eternal, and both of these together make a complete whole and that is the soul-life". The soul-life is the uncreated and unborn life-principle that connects the threads of past, present and future, and also connects the life and death. In fact, rebirth and reincarnation of the individual soul are based upon the truth of the eternality of the soul-life which is expressed by pre-existence and immortality. According to Vedanta, says the Swami, immortality includes the meaning of progress i.e. progress of growth and evolution of the soul from the lower to the higher stages of development. "It also includes the ideas that each individual soul will manifest the powers which are already latent in the soul by going through different stages of growth and development until perfection and omniscience and omnipresence are acquired. * * This idea leads to the theories of rebirth and reincarnation of the individual soul which is expressed by pre-existence and immortality".

The chapter VIII, deals with pre-existence and immortality and though these theories or problems have been discussed elaborately in the chapter VII, yet the Swami discusses them in a separate chapter by giving more facts and arguments, which are also supported by science. The Swami says in course of his argument: "Pre-existence and immortality are so closely related to each other that if we deny one, we cannot accept another". Vedanta says that each individual soul existed before the birth of the body, and so if we believe that we shall continue to exist after death, we shall have to admit that we existed in the past, otherwise we cannot have immortal life in future."

The chapter IX deals with the subject matter of science and immortality. In the beginning of this chapter, Swami Abhedananda has refuted the belief of the orthodox Christians that Jesus the Christ for the first time brought the eternal life and immortality to light. The Swami says that the idea of immortality or the immortal life existed in India some thousands of years before Christ; and the sacred scriptures of the Hindus, including the Vedas, have proved to the world the truth that the *Atman* or the real life-principle of the soul is eternal and

immortal. The students of comparative religion as well as those of history know well that Egypt, Greece, Chaldea, Mesopotamia and other ancient and most civilized countries preached the theory or idea of resurrection of the body and also of the belief in a 'double' or soul from the time between 12,000 and 8,000 B.C. The Greeks believed that the righteous ones who went to the Elysium Fields, would continue to enjoy the celestial pleasures throughout eternity. The Hindus also believe in the heavens or the *svargalokas* where the religious and righteous ones go and enjoy celestial pleasures, but they hold that the heavenly pleasures are not permanent and eternal; and so after enjoying fruits of pleasures of the heavens for a definite period, the souls come back again to this material universe, and this is the difference between the Greeks and the Hindus regarding their heavens and the celestial pleasures. However, the ideas of heaven, life after death and immortality also prevail among the Jews, Parsees, Zoroastrians, Chinese, Scandinavians and others.

Now regarding science and immortality, Swami Abhedananda says that it is a common belief that science has nothing to do with the problems of life after death and immortality, as it is absolutely concerned with the repeated observations and investigations upon the raw materials of the changing phenomena of the universe. But that is not the fact, as modern science "has resolved the whole phenomenal world into three states, and has explained that they are matter, energy and consciousness. These three things are the fundamental principles of the universe. If you study science or any of the philosophies of the world, you will find these three things, matter, energy and consciousness. But, in truth, matter, force or energy are inseparable; they are the different states of the same substance. Then there comes the third thing, consciousness". Consciousness is indestructible and eternal. So science which resolve the three main principles of matter, energy and consciousness as the fundamental principles of the universe, is quite eligible for discussing about the doctrine of immortality, and the mystery of life beyond death held much science to the unifying truth of the universe.

The chapter X deals with the spiritualism. The Swami explains in this chapter the main principles and methods of

spiritualism, with a scientific outlook. He has refuted the popular belief and the theories of production, combination and transmission. The upholders of the production theory are the atheists, agnostics, materialists and evolutionists. They believe that the material body produces the soul, which is really absurd. The upholders of the combination theory "explain that the neutral current is a stream which produces a stream of feelings. The feelings are different units of feeling, which are loose and disconnected, and there is no intelligent something which can connect those units of feeling. This theory echoes the theory of the *vijnanavadin* Buddhists, who maintain that in a stream of consciousness (*vijnana*), the units of consciousness are separate from one another, and are momentary. This theory is untenable, as it admits no intelligent something which can bind or unite together the momentary units of consciousness.

Now we find that the transmission theory proves that the soul, or the mind, or the consciousness, is outside of the brain. It is not the result or product of the brain, "but is something like a self-conscious entity, which is using the brain, just as a musician uses the piano and plays on the keys". Now the transmission theory "tells us that the 'double' or the soul is the astral self of the individual, and this astral self is something which can live independent of the gross material body, and this astral self can pass out and can appear in etherial form and perform many acts, which our ordinary self cannot do. The astral doubles are sometimes perceived by the relatives and the friends of the dying persons". Now, somehow or other, Vedanta accepts the transmission theory to prove that the matter is not perceived as an object, and is, therefore, meaningless, until there remains the mind as the subject. From this it is proved that the matter is different from the mind, as the mind forms the ground as well as the cause of the matter.

Swami Abhedananda has also discussed in this chapter the problems of personality and individuality. The personality is that particular consciousness which is related to the physical body. But individuality is something which is beyond the material body and is indivisible. Personality is changing and might be held in an earth-bound condition but individuality is constant, unchanging and infinite. Personality is a kind of mask ; it is the garment of the mind. Personality may be double,

trible, and quadruple. But it is not a certain state of consciousness, it is like an assumed character. In other words, it can be said that different ideas and different tendencies and desires create different personalities which are supported by unchanging and eternal individuality. The Swami has elaborately discussed about individuality and personality in his book, *True Psychology*.

The chapter XI deals with spiritualism and Vedanta. In this chapter Swami Abhedananda has discussed about the ancestor-worship which is prevalent among the civilized nations like the ancient Indians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Chinese, Parsees and others nations. The belief in the 'double' has been mentioned before and this 'double' is like the *sukshma-sharira* of the departed soul. The ancient Parsees used to call the departed souls of the ancestors, the *fravshis* and the Hebrews called them *elohim*. The Hindus perform the *shraddha* ceremony for the satisfaction of the departed soul, and they believe that anything offered with devotion and regard to the departed souls, brings contentment and peace among the disembodied spirits. The realm of the fathers or ancestors is called the *pitriloka*, where departed fathers enjoy heavenly life and celestial pleasures. The *Katha Upanishad* has related the story of Nachiketa and Yama, the Ruler of Death, and the story proves the existence of the soul after death. The Hindu scriptures say that the souls in this phenomenal plane and the souls in the astral plane are directed by the law of *karma*, or the law of action and reaction. The Buddhists also admit the theory. And this law of *karma* also proves the existence of the soul after death.

Swami Abhedananda has also described about the mediums through whom the spirits can communicate with their friend and relatives in this phenomenal world with their astral bodies, and Swami Abhedananda personally witnessed those materialized spirit-bodies when he attended some of the interesting seances in America. The Swami says that the earth-bound souls may take the form of his previous material bodies for his intense will, but they cannot hold those astral or subtle bodies for a long time, because they are not really conscious of their material bodies, and those bodies are melted away after a short time.

The chapter XII deals with the problems of spiritualism

and ancestor-worship. This chaapter can be said to be the supplimentary one of the chapter XI. It is interesting to mention that Swami Abhedananda has explained in this chapter many things about spiritualism including the miserable state of the disembodied spirits and of the mediums, together with the ancestorship in different scriptures of different nations of the world. He also related some of his personal experiences he gathered in the seances with the spirit-communication. He says: "Having spent sometime with the mediums of all kinds that exist in America, I wish to say a few words regarding my experiences. I have been invited by the spiritualists to speak for them and to attend their seances. I had accepted their invitations with great pleasure in order to make some investigations for my own satisfaction. I have seen many materialized spirits and have spoken with them. I have had long conversations with some who spoke through the tin trumpets, and have asked them many questions, but I have not found a single spirit in any seance and not a single medium who could answer my questions satisfactorily. I have asked them about the life after death, * * on many occasions they have confessed their ignorance and have said: 'We do not know ; you know better that we can tell you'. Some spirits have often referred to me for my approval of their answers to the questions which they were asked by other sitters. A few years ago, I was amused to hear from a materializing spirit in a public seance: 'Oh, here is a thinking-box ; what can we say before him ?' This exclamation came from an American Indian spirit. I was sitting next to the husband of the medium and, as he was a friend of mine, I asked him the meaning of such a remark. He said : 'She refers to you'. I inquired: 'Why ?' He replied: 'She thinks you are very wise, and she cannot show her power . I am sorry to say that the seance was not successful that evening. On another occasion, I had a long talk with a spirit, and asked her many questions regarding the mode of living in the spirit world, and her answers to my questions were perfectly idiotic. * * Sometimes, however, I noticed that telepathically my own thoughts and my own ideas and very expressions were reproduced as perfectly as if I was answering my own question. * * Some of them congratulated me and said: 'My spirit-guides have taught me exactly what you have explained'.

The chapter XIII deals with the spiritualistic mediumship. The Swami says: "We are all familiar with the process of developing mediumship. * * Those who wish to become the mediums, seek the company of other friends who have the same desire. They form themselves into a circle which is known as the *developing circle*. They are told by other mediums, or by their spirit-guides, to select a definite room, where they should sit as often as possible, at least once a week, but the sittings must be at the same hour and in the same evening of the week * *". The sitters sit in the developing circle with their negative mind, and must not ask any question, but surrender themselves to the will of their invisible control, and calmly wait for the wonderful results of the developing process.

Regarding the mediums, the Swami says that "a medium, who appears to be inspired in a semi-trance or full trance condition, does not show any power of his or her, which may be called a gift or inspiration * *. A medium who becomes absolutely negative or passive in mind and body, becomes subject to all the surrounding influences of the earth-bound spirits who are constantly seeking opportunity to control, and make some victims, and thus through ignorance a medium opens a psychic field which is dominated by the will of these earth-bound spirit". And for this reason, Swami Abhedananda has not encouraged them who wish to be the mediums. Because the mediums in many cases lose their physical and mental powers, and sometimes become invalid.

The chapter XIV deals with the automatic slate-writing. In this chapter, the Swami has related the story of his departed *gurubhai*, Jogen (Swami Jogananda), who appeared before the seances, and wrote with a blue pencil his name in four classical languages, Sanskrit, English, Bengali and Greek. Mr. Keeler was the medium, and it happened on August 5th at 10 o'clock in America. The photograph of this slate-writing with the spirit-hand has been included in this book, *Life Beyond Death*. The Swami says: "In another seance when I wanted to see Jogen materialized, he replied that he did not like it. But I surprised to the spirit of Babu Balaram Basu of 57, Ramakanta Bose Street, Calcutta. * * After blessing me, the whole materialized figure of Balaram Babu melted away in a mist like white substance (*ectoplasm*) and disappeared".

The chapter XV or the last chapter deals with 'what is there beyond the grave'. In this chapter, Swami Abhedananda has elaborately and scientifically dealt with many important problems of spiritualism. He says that Jesus the Christ brought eternal life into light, and the Christians believe in the resurrection of the spiritual body, which continue to live after the gross physical body is destroyed, and this belief proves the immortality of the soul among the Christian nations of the world. The similar belief is seen also among the Zoroastrians, Egyptians, Chaldeans, Babylonians, Chinese, Hindus and all other ancient nations like the Romans, the Greeks, and the Scandinavians. They all had a belief in an eternal life.

The Swami says that when a soul goes out of the material body after death, it sleeps without consciousness or knowledge of his passing away, and he awakes after a long time. When he awakes, he finds himself in an unknown world in an unfavourable circumstance with which he is not familiar. Then his sleeping and unfulfilled desires become very acute. He tries to mitigate his desires, but fails, and so he suffers much, and this suffering of the departed soul has been described as the suffering of the hell (*naraka-yantrana*). But the good souls enjoy peace and happiness in the after-world. An earth-bound spirit further suffers for his failure in communicating with the near and dear ones. It has been recorded that many disembodied souls try to rush in the open passage of the mediumistic current, but many of them cannot materialize themselves for their lack of will-power, and so they suffer. But the spirits can materialize themselves either with the help of the mediums, or without the help of any medium. B. V. Schrenck Notzing, Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Canon Doyle and others have given vivid descriptions of the process of materialization of the disembodied spirits. Swami Abhedananda says that a very few people understand or believe in the process of spirit-materialization. "I have seen with my own eyes and carefully examined in every possible way which I use under those circumstances. I have been called to come inside the cabinet of a seance where I felt at least twenty hands on my back, some pulling my collar, sash, and some putting hands on my back all at the same time.* * I have held the materialized hand of an American Indian spirit which melted away in my hand".

The Swami further says: "Some of the dying persons develop the clairvoyance and the clairaudience. They can appear just at the distant friends in the form of the apparition and they can give their messages". Further he has said: "If it (the departed soul) has strong attachments to the relatives or the friends and if it cannot get over those attachments, it hovers around them, remains close to them, tries to help them to be loved by them, and there it is conscious of its personality. ** I would be wondering while my relatives and friends and all the dearest ones do not recognise me, and there I have to suffer. Now that is what happens with certain people who do not know that they are dead. ** It is just like a state of hell". "But many of the departed spirits remain in that state of delusion for a long time. Our time does not affect the spirits. Ours a thousand years may be five days to them, because ours is according to our standard and theirs according to their standard. So no one can say how long a soul will remain in any particular condition, but it is important that we should remember this law that we create our future, we create our destiny, and we build our character by our thoughts and deeds". However the Swami has warned and instructed them who are eager to be the mediums and who also wish to sit in the seance to communicate with the disembodied spirits that the aims and object of human life are to attain to the self-realization, and not to satisfy the cheap curiosity of communicating with the departed spirits. Because by communicating with the spirits, good or bad, a man cannot make himself free from the bondage of nescience or *maya*. The Swami says: "Supposing all the phenomena of spiritism to be true and genuine, but what have the spiritualists gained by these communications outside of the satisfaction of their idle curiosity? Have they learned any of the higher truths? ** Vain is the hope of those spiritualists who expect to know the absolute Truth through communications from the earth-bound spirits". The Swami further says that death teaches a great lesson to all the mortal beings, and teaches that the material body as well as the material world along with its pleasures and pains, are not permanent. The permanent thing in this world is the *Atman*, which is the background or support of the body and the world. So we should go beyond the attachment of the

worldly pleasures, and should attain to the highest spiritual realization of the *Atman*. The Swami afterwards concludes: "We are just playing on the surface, but the time is bound to come for each individual soul when there will be an awakening of a desire to know the real truth".

This book has been edited with care for the *Complete Works*. Various footnotes, references, and some of the appendices have been added by the editor. A Preface has been added to the book.

SWAMI PRAJNANANANDA

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

MODERN SCIENCE AND HIGHER SPIRITUALISM

The Experimental Spiritualism—Sir William Crooks—Katie King—Mrs. Florence Cook—The scientific study of the phenomena of Spiritualism—Scientific thinkers—Maurice Maeterlinck — Prof. Myers — Dr. Hodgeson — Prof. William James—Mr. C. N. Jones—Sir Oliver Lodge—Alfred R. Wallace—Dr. Thomas Jay Hudson—Camille Flammarion—Prof. Hyslop of Columbia—Spiritism cannot explain any of our vital questions—True Spiritualism—Stanton Moses.

CHAPTER II

DOES THE SOUL EXIST AFTER DEATH

What the atheistic and agnostic think—Charvakas—Solomon in Old Testament—The dormant questions about our life and death—The modern scientists—Buchner the materialist—J. Luys—Percival Lowell—Herbert Spencer—Prof. W. K. Clifford—The Vedanta philosophers—John Stuart Mill—G. J. Romanes—Dr. Schiller—Kant—Hume—Those who depend on sense perception—The Yogis in India—The appearance of the 'double'—What science says—Prof. William James—The test of spiritualistic seances—The Hindus—The Vedanta philosophy—Christian missionaries—*Bhagavad Gita*—Ralph Waldo Emerson—Personality—The world of the *Pitris*—The heaven and the hell—The Persians—The Egyptians—The Chaldeans—The Christian idea—Prof. Huxley—The soul.

CHAPTER III

THE SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF DEATH

The *Mahabharata* on death—The mystery of death is not solved by mythology—Different scriptures—The Genesis—Adam and Satan—Scientific researches—Deaths of the conscious life and the cellular life—Prof. Charles Minot—Causes

and signs of death—Trance, catalepsy and ecstasy—The old Babylonian method of embalming the body—The cremation method—The belief of the Egyptians—Mind as a factor in the case of death—Dr. John Hunter—Tourtelle, the French physician—Extreme anger generates poison—Grief produces a havoc—*Prana* the life-force—Mind and the *Prana*—Mind is the creator—Who is the conductor of the organs—*Ectoplasm*—Materializing mediums—Soul at the time of death—C. Flammarion—What is materialization—Subtle body—Body, the instrument—Death is no longer mysterious—Nothing is destroyed—There is something unchangeable in the midst of changes.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOUL AFTER DEATH

Different views of death and soul—*Katha Upanishad*—The Vedas—*Brahmaloka*—Law of *Karma*—*Pitriyana*—*Devayana*—The heavens—Higher conception of Vedanta—Zend Avesta on Spiritualism—Old and New Testaments—The Persians—The Egyptians—The Chaldeans—Pythagoras and Plato—What Plato believed—Vedanta on transmigration—Power exists in nature—The views of the so-called scientists—Race or species—Evolution—Soul is immortal—Vedanta cares not for heaven or hell.

CHAPTER V

REBIRTH OF THE SOUL

The term soul—Materialistic thinkers—Everything is subject to the law of cause and effect—Scientific thinkers—A germ of life—Mind and its functions—Psychic powers—Rebirth of the soul does not mean the same thing as transmigration—Metempsychosis and reincarnation—Births according to the merits and demerits of deeds—What is transmigration—Migrating substance—Mythological theory of transmigration—The belief of the Hindus—Rational minds do not believe in the retrogression of the human souls into animal forms—Doctrine of reincarnation is based upon the theory of evolution—The passages of the *Upanishads*—Reincarnation of the soul does not

mean the same thing as expressed by the Buddhist philosophers—One-birth theory—The Christian theologians on reincarnation—The followers of Judaism, Christianity and Moham-medanism—Time has no absolute existence—What nature teaches—The Greek philosophers about doctrine of reincarnation—One-birth theory and heredity do not explain the mystery of rebirth—The protoplasmic cell—Theories against heredity—Illustrations of reincarnations.

CHAPTER VI

THE SOUL AND ITS DESTINY

Questions of the soul and its destiny—Popular belief among the Christians—The idea of eternal life among different nations—Arguments of the scientists about destiny of the soul—Psychology on destiny—The old materialistic theory about it—Self-consciousness cannot be produced by the combination of matter—Psychological researches—What are matter, knowledge and consciousness—Matter produces nothing but matter—Vedanta explains the destiny of the soul—Modern Spiritualism.

CHAPTER VII

PRE-EXISTENCE AND REINCARNATION

Different schools of thought about pre-existence and reincarnation—Dr. Thompson—Non-existence cannot produce existence—What is the cause—Leibnitz—Vedanta philosophy on soul—Subtle body—Parents do not create the souls—The believers of one-birth theory—Genesis—Buck and Bethoven—Immortality—Michael Angelo—Memory continues—What is love—Pre-existence and reincarnation go hand in hand.

CHAPTER VIII

PRE-EXISTENCE AND IMMORTALITY

Immortality is one of the fundamental principles of the philosophy and religion of Vedanta—The orthodox view of the Christian theologians—Conception of immortality in Vedanta differs from that of Christianity—The laws of nature—Pre-existence of the soul—True immortality according to Vedanta

—Raja Yoga and pre-existence—The subconscious mind is the storehouse of all the impressions—Dormant impressions mould our characters—Persons who are born with some wonderful powers—The word 'love'—Vedanta and immortality—Modern Spiritualism—Rebirth and reincarnation of the soul—Reward and punishment of the soul after death depend upon its thoughts and deeds—Vedanta and heaven.

CHAPTER IX

SCIENCE AND IMMORTALITY

The popular belief in Christendom—The ancient records in Egypt—The belief among the pious Christians—Jesus the the Christ did not bring the idea of immortality to the world for the first time—Zend Avesta and immortality—What is death—Science and death—Christian theologians and death—The meaning of *immortality*—Physical bodies are subject to change—Everything is in vibration—Analysis of the conception of pleasure—What lies in the gross description of hell and heaven—What is *personality*—A finite cause can never produce an infinite result—God cannot change the laws—The law of *karma*—There is one universal law—The materials—Modern Scientists—What is soul—Christian Scientists—The knower and the changing states of consciousness—The books will not reveal the Truth—Raja Yoga and concentration—What the scriptures of the Hindus say.

CHAPTER X

SPIRITUALISM

Different questions about death—The popular belief in the soul—Three theories for proving the existence of the soul—The materialistic theory—The examination of the brain—Speech-centre and the brain—The mind and the brain—The combination theory—The transmission theory—What do the dying persons do—What happens after death—Vedanta and the transmission theory—Mind and matter—Mind and the brain—*Individuality* and *personality*—Souls after death—*Personality* is subject to change—An instance of the soul in the other world—what do we mean by life after death—Heavens are not eternal—

What is eternity—Souls create their own conditions—Teachings of Vedanta are in perfect harmony with the nature—We are the creators of our destinies.

CHAPTER XI

SPIRITUALISM AND VEDANTA

Modern Spiritualism—Ancestor-worship—Ancient Egyptians, Babylonians and Chaldeans and ancestor-worship—Religion of the ancient Chinese—The ancient Parsees—Judaism and Mohammedanism—The saint-worship among the Roman Catholics—The belief in departed spirits in India—*Pitriloka*—Mediums and seances—Vedanta and the law of *karma*—The realm of the fathers and the path which leads to the realization of Truth—Earthbound souls—Mediums become more or less moral and physical wrecks in the end—The genuine phenomena of Spiritism—The attainment of Godconsciousness is the highest ideal of Vedanta.

CHAPTER XII

SPIRITUALISM AND ANCESTOR-WORSHIP

What modern Spiritualism has taught—Eucharist of the Christians—Welfare work for the spirits—Hindu belief in spirits—The religions of the spiritualists—Fraudulence of the mediums and the spirits—Idiotic answers from the spirit—Mediums can be controlled by anyone—Mediumship in India—Realms of the fathers are not permanent—Living beings on any plane cannot escape the cycle of birth and rebirth.

CHAPTER XIII

SPIRITUALISTIC MEDIUMSHIP

Modern Spiritualism have opened a new field for scientific investigation—Sceptics and agnostics have no faith—Modern Spiritualism has exploded damnation theory—Developing Circle—The method of sittings in the seances—The best results of mediumship—The spirit and the medium—Spirit-control—What the spirits do when they gain control over the mediums—A hypnotic sleep—Trances of the mediums—Materializing

mediumship—*Ectoplasm*—Genuine and fraudulent materialization—The process of materialization—Kinds of materializing trance—Is it beneficial for the mortals to develop mediumship—Mediumship does not signify any gift or special talent—Manifestation of the spirits through the mediumistic channels—Mediums lose their power of self-control—A high state of mediumship—Evil effects of mediumistic development—The true Yogis in India.

CHAPTER XIV

AUTOMATIC SLATE-WRITING

Experience in a seance—Automatic writing—Visit to the famous slate-writing medium Mr. Keeler—The writing in the slate by the unseen hand—Electric shock in arms—Writings were in four different languages—Swami Yogananda's handwriting—A voice came in another seance—Materialized body of Babu Balaram Basu—Questions to him—Voice of Swami Yogananda.

CHAPTER XV

WHAT IS THERE BEYOND THE GRAVE

The Psalms—Jews did not believe in the existence of a soul—The Zoroastrians on soul—Pharisees and Sadducees—Resurrection of the body—Heaven and hell—Last Day of Judgment and Ahura Mazda—Belief in Messiah—Egyptian heaven—The writings of the Babylonians and Chaldeans—The Greek and Roman histories—The Scandinavian belief in Valhalla—Different beliefs in heavens—Heavens are projections of our own ideas—The popular belief in the existence of discarnate souls—Death is not an enemy of life—The belief of orthodox Christianity—The condition of a dying man—Latent powers become stronger at the time of death—Souls contract their powers—Our central life—*Sukshma-sarira*—Weight of the psychic body—Attraction of the spirit for his material body—The soul enters the *borderland* after bodily death—Borderland, the state of vibration—The thoughts and ideas of the spirits—Earthbound souls—There is a general law for everybody—Periodicity of the soul-slumber—The material bodies are the results of our thoughts and deeds—The Hindus believe in the

existence of the soul from time immemorial—The fraudulent spirits—Spirits borrow powers from the subconscious mind of anybody—The funeral ceremonies of the Hindus are different from that of the Christians—We can help spirits more than they can help us—Good thoughts or prayers help the spirits—Present *karma*, the seed of the future—The conditions of the souls in their slumbers—Astral shells—Those are the planes which we call heavens—Law of cause and sequence—The realm of thought—How do the spirits see, touch, hear in the world beyond grave—Sleep after death is like the sleep before birth—The second sleep—The souls seek conditions and environments before their births—The occupations may be according to the beliefs—There is none to mould our future—Desires are the cause of our sufferings—The wise ones will never be afraid of death.

CHAPTER XVI

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

A summary of the Swami's speech at an Anniversary Meeting of the Psychical Research Society of Calcutta.

APPENDIX B

Questions and Answers: Discussions that we were privileged to have with the Swami.

APPENDIX C

Speeches by Prof. Josiah Royce of Harvard University, Dr. Lewis G. Janes of Cambridge, Prof James H. Hyslop of Columbia University and Swami Abhedananda in the *Free Religious Association* of America in Session—Speeches by the Swami on Spiritualism published in various journals of America.

APPENDIX D

Notes.

APPENDIX E

Extracts from the Rig Veda and the *Upanishads* and writings of the mystics, poets and philosopher regarding the pre-existence and mortality of the soul.

CHAPTER I

MODERN SCIENCE AND HIGHER SPIRITUALISM

During the last sixty years, spiritualism has made considerable progress, convincing many scientific minds who have been earnestly seeking for the truth of man's survival after death. The experimental spiritualism began in America in 1870. In the following year, Sir William Crookes, a scientist of great reputation and a man of extraordinary genius, began his investigations with the aid of the medium, Mrs. Florence Cook. It will be needless to go into the details of Sir Crookes' experiments which lasted for three years with that celebrated medium. During this period, he took all precautions against the possible fraud or trickery imaginable, and he employed the scientific methods of observation and experiments with the delicate instruments. The seances were held in his own house with the honest friends who were equally eager to discover whether there was any truth in the spirit phenomena. Many Americans became familiar with the name of Katie King, the spirit-control of Mrs. Florence Cook. She materialized herself, her pulsations were recorded, her heart-beating was heard and was photographed, and she distributed the locks of her materialized hair to those who were present there. We remember that all these happened under strictly test conditions in his own rooms, where electric wires with bells were fixed on the walls so that the least little intrusion from outside could be instantly detected. Sir William Crookes was at first ridiculed by the scientific world, but he had the courage of his convictions which led him to publish the reports of his experiments, and he kept on experimenting ever since.

Sir W. Crookes was also aided by another celebrated medium, Mr. D. D. Home who was more powerful than Mrs. Florence Cook in withstanding antagonistic influences, and most of his seances were not in darkness, but in the bright light. For the scientific study of the phenomena of spiritualism, the Society for the Psychical Research was established in London in 1885, under the auspices of the eminent men of science in

England. It is commonly known as S. P. R. The records of this Society have shown how marvellous were the scientific patience and conscientiousness of men like Edmund Gurney, Dr. F. W. H. Myers, Frank Podmore and their successors. Those who have read Myers' great work entitled *Human Personality and Its Survival after Bodily Death*, will realize the truth of this statement.

Other scientific thinkers like Alfred Russell Wallace, Robert Dale Owen, Prof. Aksakof, Richard Hodgson, William James of Harvard, and Sir Oliver Lodge, the Principal of the University of Birmingham, England, have spared no pains to make the correct investigations under test conditions regarding the truth of the spirit manifestations. Well has it been said by Maurice Maeterlinck, referring to their labourious task:

Not an incident is admitted that is not supported by unimpeachable testimony, by definite written records, and convincing corroboration; in a word, it is hardly possible to contest the essential veracity of the majority of them, unless we begin by making up our minds to deny any positive value to human evidence.¹

We are all familiar with the fact that Prof. Myers, who was the President of S.P.R. for many years, promised his friends that he would come back after his bodily death in a decisive manner. He kept his promise, and a month after his death, he communicated with Sir Oliver Lodge through the noted medium Mrs. Thompson while she was entranced. Myers' identity was recognized by the first few words he spoke, and it was really he and no one else. He said that it was very difficult for him to convey his ideas through the mediums. He said: "They were translating as a school boy does his first line of Virgil". Referring to his present condition, Myers said that he groped his way as if through passages before he knew he was dead. He thought that he had lost his way in a strange town, and even when he saw the people which he knew, were dead, and he thought they were only visions.²

Dr. Hodgson, who was the Secretary of the American branch of the S. P. R., of which William James was the Vice-

¹ *Our Eternity*, pp. 82-83.

² *Ibid.* p. 108.

President, promised to come back after his death, and week after his departure he came back and communicated by the automatic writing through Mrs. Piper, and William James was present at these sittings.

William James of Harvard, also in his turn, promised to come back after his death. He kept his promise by communicating with Mr. C. N. Jones, the President of the American Institute of Scientific Research, and formerly Professor of Applied Mathematics in the University of Michigan. Mr. C. N. Jones gave the details of the communications in his article which was published in *New York Papers*.³ The first communication was received on the evening of October 22nd, 1910. Five more communications followed one another and the last was on March 11th, 1911. In these, Prof. James tried his best to establish his personal identity, and Mr. Jones and others, who were present there, were all satisfied. Among other things which are interesting Prof. James said:

"I am thankful that there are some who are perfectly willing that I should come to them. I mean this kind man here, who is standing by my side, and who lets me use him—his body. He steps out and lets me use his body and I am thankful. I don't want to injure it or make it unfit for him in any way."

It is said that Prof. James shook hands with his friends. Sir Oliver Lodge, after making many scientific experiments with the help of Mrs. Piper and other mediums, is now convinced that there is the survival of life after death. He said in his Presidential Address before the British Association, held in September, 1913:

"In justice to myself and to my co-workers, I must risk annoying my present hearers not only by leaving on record our conviction that occurrence now regarded as occult can be examined and reduced to order by the methods of science carefully and persistently applied, but also by going further and saying with the utmost brevity that already the facts so examined have convinced me, that memory and affection are not limited to that association with matter by which

³ *Times*, Dec., 10th, 1911.

alone they can manifest themselves here and now, and that personality persists beyond bodily death. The evidence, to my mind, goes to prove that the discarnate intelligence, under certain conditions, may interact with us on the material side, thus indirectly coming within our scientific ken."

The great English scientist Alfred R. Wallace also said:

"No more evidence is needed to prove the spiritualism, for no accepted fact in science has a greater or strong array of proof in its behalf."

Dr. Thomas Jay Hudson, author of the *Law of Psychic Phenomena*, said:

"The man who denies spiritualism today is not entitled to be called a skeptic, he is simply ignorant."

Camille Flammarion, W. T. Stead, Prof. Hyslop and others have been equally convinced that the discarnate spirits can communicate with us. Thus we see that such great men of science, as I have mentioned, have already accepted the truth upon which the modern spiritualism is founded.

Although many of the professional mediums have been pitifully exposed as frauds, still there are genuine mediums and authentic spirit manifestations which cannot be explained by telepathy or any other theory than that of the communication of the discarnate spirits. On many occasions, the audience is deceived by the earth-bound spirits. The manifestations on the material plane, such as table-turning, rapping knocks of the spirit, etc. are ordinarily understood by spiritualism. But all such phenomena belong to the lower class of the spiritualism, or spiritism, as it is called by many. Spiritism can only satisfy our curiosity and does not explain any of our vital questions. But true spiritualism should be distinguished from that phase which is called spiritism. The higher spiritualism, therefore, is the name for that which starting from the belief in a life after death, reveals the nature of the soul and its relation to God. This higher spiritualism is at the root of all great religions of the world. The communications with so-called angels or messengers of God, or bright spirits, as they are called in India, have been the source of knowledge and inspiration of the Prophets and Seers of the Old and the New Testaments. From the time

of Abraham, Jacob and Moses down to the time of Christ and his disciples, all Prophets and Seers saw the spirits, heard them speak, and followed their teachings. As is in the Christianity and the Judaism, so is in other religions of the world. As the revelations came to the sincere and earnest souls of the past, so they have come even in this age.

Those, who have read the spirit-teachings which came through the mediumship of Stainton Moses, will remember how the higher spirits under the names of Doctor, Rector, Imperator, revealed their messages to help the mankind to bring them out of the dogmas, creeds and superstition of the existing churches.

Here we should remember that Stainton Moses was an orthodox Anglican clergyman of England. He was dogmatic and creed-bound, but still through him came the messages which were not only astounding to him, but to the Christian world at large.

CHAPTER II

DOES THE SOUL EXIST AFTER DEATH

One of the most poetical pieces of the *Upanishads*, I mean the *Katha*, which has been translated by Sir Edwin Arnold, under the title of *The Secret of Death*, begins with this inquiry:

“There is this doubt ; when a man dies some say that he is gone for ever, that he does not exist, while others hold that he still lives ; which of these is true?”¹

Various answers have been given to this question, and metaphysics, philosophy, science, and religion have also been tried to solve this problem. All the same time, the attempts have been made to suppress this question and to prevent the inquiry as to whether or not man exists after death. Hundreds of thinkers have brought forward all sorts of arguments to do away with the questions bearing upon this momentous subject.

From ancient times, there have been the atheistic and agnostic thinkers in India who denied the existence of the soul after the death of the body. They are known as the Charvakas. They believe that the body is the soul, and the soul does not exist outside of the body, and when the body dies, the soul is also dead and gone. They believe in nothing that cannot be perceived by the sense. Their motto is:

“As long as you live, do not fail to enjoy. Live comfortably and enjoy the pleasure of life. Do not think of the future. Get all that you need and wish ; if you have not got money, then beg or borrow it, for when the body is burnt into ashes no one will have to be accountable for your deeds.”²

¹ येऽयं प्रेते विचिन्तित्वा मनुष्येऽस्तीत्येके नायस्तीति चैके ।

एतद् विद्यामनुशिष्टस्त्वयार्हं वराणामेष वरस्तृतीयः ॥

—कठ उपनिषद् १।२०

² न स्वर्गो नापवर्गा वा नैवात्मा पारलौकिकः ।

नैव वर्णाश्रमादीनि क्रीयाश्च फलदायिकाः ॥

*

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*

Such Charvakas we find in almost every country. For instance, in the Old Testament we read, Solomon says:

“Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart * * Live joyfully with the wife—whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.” (*Ecclix.* 7, 9, 10)

The followers of such thinkers are spreading very rapidly, and their number is increasing every day. They are now known as the atheists, agnostics, materialists, etc. According to this class of thinkers, those who believe in the existence of the soul as separate from the body, or in a life after death, are ignorant and superstitious fools, while those who follow their ideas, are the clever and intelligent beings. Most of them hold that there is no such thing as soul. No argument can convince them or change their views, because they will not admit the existence of anything which lies beyond the reach of their senses, or which cannot be perceived by the limited powers of the senses.³ They have written volumes after volumes against the existence of the soul, and have tried to stop such useless questions of the mind, but, in spite of their efforts, have they succeed in stopping that innate question: ‘what remains after death’ that rises spontaneously in almost every human heart? No, they have not succeeded. The same question rises today as it arose thousands of years ago, but no one can stop it, because it is inseparably connected with our nature.

The same question was asked by the saints and the sinners, by the Prophets and the priests, by the kings and the beggars, amongst all nations in all climes. We are discussing the same question today, and it will be discussed in the future. We may forget it for the time being in the turmoil and struggles of our lives, we may not ask it when we are deeply absorbed in comforts, luxuries and sense enjoyments, we may delude ourselves by various false argumentations, but the moment we encounter the sudden appearance of death, the moment we see that some

³ यावज्जीवेत् सुखम् जीवेत् ऋणं कृत्वा घृतं पिबेत् ।

भस्मीभूतस्य देहस्य पुनरागमनं कुतः ।

—सर्वदर्शनसंग्रहे बृहस्पति

one of our nearest and dearest ones is breathing his last, we stop for a while and ask within ourselves: What is this ? Where is he gone ? Does he still exist ? What has become of him ? Those dormant questions reappear in new forms and disturb our peace of mind. Then we begin to inquire about them again ; but at the very threshold of our inquiry, we find an adamant wall which is almost impossible to break through. The weak intellects stop there and their feeble attempts to cross that wall produce no result. That wall is nothing but the belief that the body is the producer of the soul, and that the soul is the result of the physical form which we call the body. Those who can overcome this strong barrier, can understand whether or not the soul exists after death. The old crude way of inferring the existence of the soul after death and a future life for all men, women, and children from the tradition of a single miraculous resurrection of a certain person, no longer appeals to our reason. The days of believing blindly in the authority of any one's saying are gone by. We are no longer children, we want maturer reason, and we want to discuss that question more deeply. Those who believe in that miraculous resurrection, will perhaps say that those who do not believe in it, have no hope. But we no longer accept their statements. The time has come when we want to discuss the questions scientifically, psychologically, philosophically, metaphysically, and in all other possible ways.

Now let us see whether the explanation that body is the cause of the soul, is satisfactory or not. Taking it for granted that the the soul, or the mass of intelligence,⁴ or whatever you may call it, is the outcome of the combinations of matter which make up the body, and we ask: What is the cause of that body ? What force combines the matter in the form of the body ? What force is there which forms your body in one way and my body in another ? What is the cause of those distinctions ? The materialistic Charvakas will answer that this body

⁴ स यथा सैन्धवधनोऽनन्तरोऽवाह्याः कृत्स्नो रसधन एव, एवं वा अरेऽयमात्मानन्तरोऽवाह्याः कृत्स्नो प्रज्ञानधन एव ; एतेभ्यो भूतेभ्यः समुत्थाय तान्येवानुविनश्यति, न प्रेत्य संज्ञास्तीत्यरे ब्रवीमिति होवाच याज्ञवल्क्यः ।

was caused by another body of the parents. As the parents produce these body, so the body of the parents is the cause of this body. But that is not the true answer, for instead of explaining the cause of this body and this combination of matter, they show us another combination of matter, and the question remains the same. What is the cause of the combination of matter? They answer, but they forward also another combination of matter. So, instead of answering the question and explaining the cause of the combination of matter, they say that this combination is the result of another combination, which ultimately leads to the fallacy of *regress ad infinitum*. The method of explaining the soul by the body is like the process of explaining the cause by the effect, which is putting the cart before the horse.

The modern physiologists, the anatomists, the pathologists, and a host of other materialistic and agnostic thinkers, however, hold that the body, or the combination of matter, produces thought, intelligence, consciousness, mind or soul. They teach that thought, intelligence, or consciousness, is nothing but a function of the brain. Moreover, they learn that every special form of thought is a result of the activity of a special portion of the brain. When we see things, or think of the seen objects, the optical convolutions of our brain are active. A certain portion of the tympanal lobes are active when we hear, and so on.

Those of the modern scientists who advocate the production of the thought by the brain, say that the mind is coterminous with the brain functions. If the brain functions stop, the mind, intelligence, consciousness and all the mental phenomena will instantly stop. The phenomena of the consciousness correspond to the element for the element, and to the operations of the special parts of the brain. They say that there is no such thing as soul; consequently, there can be no question regarding its existence after death. They deny the existence of the soul altogether. The sensations decay, when the organic conditions change and stop, when the machinery stops. The brain brings into existence the material of consciousness of which our minds consist. Some explain the process by which thought is produced by the brain, by saying that the peculiar structure of the brain is destined to produce thought and consciousness, just as the

stomach is destined to perform the function of digestion and the liver to secrete bile. As the materials of food, after falling into the stomach, change and assume new qualities, so the impressions of the brain are metamorphosed into ideas, thought, emotion, will, expressions of the face, speech, disposition, etc. through nerves. Thus thought or soul is the secretion of the brain, and when the brain is gone, the soul cannot exist. Here impressions are compared to food, as if the impressions were the gross forms of matter, or as if they could exist apart from a perceiving mind. Buchner, one of the most famous materialists, says:

‘Thinking must be regarded as a special mode of general natural motion.’

J. Luys says:

‘As one sees a metallic rod, placed in a glowing furnace, gradually heats itself and passes successively from the shades of bright red to dark red, to white and develops as its temperature rises, heat and light, so the living sensitive cells, in presence of the incitations that solicit them, exalt themselves, progressively as to their most interior sensibility’.

Percival Lowell says:

‘When we have, as we say, an idea, what happens inside of us is probably like this: the neural current of molecular change passes up the nerves, and through the ganglia reaches at last the cortical cells * *. When it reaches the cortical cells, it finds a set of molecules which are not so accustomed to this special change. The current encounters resistance, and in overcoming this resistance, it causes the cells to glow. This white-heating of the cells we call consciousness. Consciousness, in short, is probably nerve-glow.’

Thus the Western materialists, who believe that the physical forces are metamorphosed into ideas, thoughts and sensations, describe the process by which this change takes place. Herbert Spencer, being an agnostic, advocates the metamorphosis of the physical forces into the states of consciousness, but he does not describe the process. He leaves it as a mystery which is impossible to fathom. That is, he does not know how this

matemorphosis takes place, but he is sure it does take place. Spencer, however, identifies the soul with the brain, and compares it to the piano. He says:

'Ideas are like the successive chords and cadences brought out, which successively die as the other ones are sounded, and it would be as proper to say that these passing chords and cadences thereafter exists in the piano, as it is proper to say that passing ideas thereafter exist in the brain (soul).⁵

But here Mr. Spencer forgets that the piano needs a performer to produce musical sounds. Music is never brought out by the piano itself, if it does not exist in the mind of the performer. So, his analogy, is imperfect and incomplete. It would have been complete if he supposed that the individual soul or mind is detached from the brain and plays upon its nervous centres and brain cells as a performer, plays upon the keys of a piano.

Another materialistic thinker, Professor W. K. Clifford, who believes in the combination theory, says:

'Consciousness is a complex thing made up of elements, a stream of feelings. The action of the brain is also a complex thing made up of elements, a stream of nerve message. For every feeling in consciousness, there is at the same time a nerve message of the brain. Consciousness is not a simple thing, but complex; it is the combination of feelings into a stream. Inexorable facts connect our consciousness with this body that we know; and that not merely as a whole, but the parts of it are connected severally with parts of our brain action. If there is any similar connection with a spiritual body, it only follows that the spiritual body must die at the same time with the natural one.'

Thus the materialistic thinkers, who do not believe in a soul as separate from the brain, or independent of the physical body, try to deduce mind and intelligence from matter, or from the combinations of matter, either by applying the theory of production or the theory of combination.

In India, similar theories were advanced by the Charvakas who did not believe in the existence of a soul as separate from

⁵ Vide *Principles of Psychology*, VII. p. 485.

the gross body.⁶ The Buddhists maintained that the body is the cause of the mind and intelligence, that consciousness is the result of the combination of insentient matter and unintelligent forces of physical nature. They used the illustration of the inebriating power of liquor arising from a chemical combination of certain ingredients.

But the Vedanta philosophers refuted both these materialistic theories by pointing out the fallacy of their principal arguments. Vedanta says that one half of the universe is matter or object, and the other half is mind or soul.⁷ It is impossible to deduce the one from the other. In the first place, if we analyse our knowledge of matter and force, we find that we cannot know matter by itself, and also cannot know force by itself; that what we know is nothing but a mental change. Knowledge of matter is nothing but the knowledge of that change of the mind of which we are conscious. When we say that matter exists, we are conscious of a peculiar mental change, beyond which we cannot know. The mind cannot go beyond itself. Even our knowledge that the soul, or the mind, is a function of the brain, presupposes the existence of another mind or knower. Whenever we say that consciousness or soul is the result of the combination of matter, that statement also requires another mind to be conscious of that idea. John Stuart Mill was right in saying that after dissecting a human brain when one does not find there any trace of the soul or mind, and denies its existence, or asserts that mind or soul is the function of the brain, he forgets that such knowledge necessarily implies the existence of his mind or soul. As the knowledge of matter, or brain, or any other kind of knowledge, depends upon the self-consciousness, it will be absurd to deny the priority of that which is the basis of consciousness, of intelligence, and of all knowledge, and with the help of which one can know the existence of matter or its combinations. G. J. Romanes says:

'We cannot think any of the facts of external nature without pre-supposing the existence of a mind which thinks them, and, therefore, so far at least as we are concerned, mind is necessarily prior to everything else. It is for us

⁶ Vide Notes.

⁷ Cf. Swami Abhedananda: *Self-knowledge*, pp. 17-18.

the only mode of existence which is real in its own right and to it, as to a standard, all other modes of existence which may be inferred, must be referred. Therefore, if we say that mind is a function of motion, we are only saying in somewhat confused terminology that mind is a function of itself. Such then, I take to be a general refutation of materialism.⁸

If it be a scientific truth that motion produces nothing but motion, as it has been established by modern science, how can we maintain that the molecular motion of the brain-cells produces consciousness or intelligence, which is not the same as motion, but is a knower of motion? Therefore Vedanta philosophy teaches that the source of consciousness cannot be found in matter, but stands independent of it. What we call matter, is only the medium through which consciousness manifests itself.

Dr. Schiller, an eminent thinker of the West, holding similar opinion, says:

'Matter is not that which produces consciousness, but that which limits it and confines its intensity within certain limits; material organization does not construct consciousness out of arrangements of atoms, but contracts its manifestation within the sphere which it permits.'

There are other agnostic thinkers who say:

'The conception of a soul as a substantive thing is a mere figment of imagination.'

Kant says:

'There is no means whatever by which we can learn anything respecting the constitution of the soul so far as regards the possibility of its separate existence.'

David Hume, like some of the Buddhist philosophers, believes that the human soul is nothing but a bundle of impressions and ideas. Hume says:

'When I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other of

⁸ Vide Romanes: *Mind and Motion and Monism*, p. 21.

heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep, so long I am insensible of myself and may be truly said not to exist. And were all my perceptions removed by death and I could neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate, after the dissolution of my body. I should be entirely annihilated ; nor do I conceive what is further requisite to make me a perfect nonentity.'

So, according to Hume, our souls die every night when we sleep soundly. I think that very few of us will be ready to accept such an explanation of the nature of the human soul.

Those, who depend on sense perceptions only, try to see the soul by dissecting the brain, but when the senses do not reveal it, they deny its existence. They may just as well try to find the soul in the heart or stomach, as the ancient seekers of the soul did. If we examine properly, we shall be able to see logical fallacies and inconsistencies in all the materialistic and agnostic arguments which support the theory that soul is the result of the body, or of the combination of matter, or else that the soul does not exist at all. From ancient times, such materialistic conclusions have been repeatedly arrived at by thinkers of different countries. But do our minds remain satisfied with such ideas, and do we stop from asking again and again: is there any life after death ? If we hear millions of times 'there is no soul', still we cannot be entirely convinced that we shall cease to exist after death ; we cannot believe that our individuality will be lost for ever. Such solutions do not appeal to our reason. They do not satisfy our minds, nor do they bring any consolation to our souls. These statements are but that which exists eternally. If existence be a truth today, it must be true eternally.

If we deny the existence of a soul as independent of the body, we cannot explain many facts which often occur during our lifetime, nor the genuine phenomena described in the reports of the Psychical Research Society of Europe and America. We cannot ignore the facts of the agnostics who have seen their 'doubles' outside of themselves when alone in their rooms reposing on a couch or an easy chair. There are instances of

such doubles talking, walking, or doing various other things. How are these facts to be explained? There are many descriptions of the manifestation of the doubles of the Yogis in India. Various attempts have been made to explain such events by asserting that they are either optical delusions, or hallucinations of the brain. But we cannot say that they are optical delusions or hallucinations, if they can stand the test of verification. There are many properly verified instances of the appearance of the double. Suppose at night before retiring, one is sitting alone in his room, after locking the door from inside, and suppose his mind is greatly disturbed with some important business questions or some mathematical problems. He suddenly sees another exactly like himself, sitting at his desk with a pen in his hand, writing something on a piece of paper, and, after examination he finds that it is an answer to his question or the correct solution of the problem which has puzzled him for many days. What explanation will you offer? What kind of hallucination is this? What a verification stronger and more satisfactory than this do you want to have? Such an occurrence cannot be explained by clairvoyance or telepathy. Some may say it is a false story, but mere assertion does not disprove the facts. The denial of a fact does not change the nature of the fact. Facts are facts whether we admit or deny them, whether our current theory can explain them or not. Clairvoyance, telepathy, and thought transference have failed to explain these cases. Such facts can only be explained by the theory of existence of the soul, as separable from the body. According to science, that theory is true, which can explain most facts, and we should accept it until a better theory or a better explanation comes. Those who believe in the theory of production, or that of combination, will shut their eyes to such facts. But those who believe in the transmission theory or, in other words, those who hold that the brain of the human body is the instrument through which the soul manifests its powers, will find no difficulty in explaining all the genuine phenomena connected with the 'double'. The transmission theory also puts itself in touch with a whole class of experiences that are which difficulty explained by the production theory.

Again there are authentic instances of the persons appearing

to their friends immediately after death.⁹ There are many such instances in India, in Europe, and in every country. Such instances may occur where the persons appearing to friends ask to have their children taken care of, or bring some message. One need not go to the spiritualistic seances to experience these things. Many such experiences have come to persons in private life and in their own homes, and they have been well verified. In spiritualistic seances, ninety-nine cases, out of one hundred of spirit manifestations, are mixed with fraud, and many professional mediums have been most pitifully exposed both here and abroad. The motive power in the professional mediums is to make money, or to earn a living.

In India, the Hindus do not trust in the professional mediums. On the contrary, they say it is wicked to hold the public seances for money. It is more wicked to earn a living at the expense of the poor spirits. Why do you try to earn your living by making the poor spirits appear to you? Those persons, who do this, are considered as the ordinary *fakirs*. Although many mediums have been exposed and many spirit manifestations have been proved to be like magic or jugglery, still those fraudulent cases cannot be the reason for denying the existence of the soul as apart from the body, or in a life after death. Now the question may arise: If the soul exists after death, does it retain its individuality? The Vedanta philosophy says, yes, it does. The souls of the earth-bound spirits retain their personality too. Some of the Western writers who have known very little of Hindu philosophy, say that the highest ideal of the Hindu religion is the annihilation of the soul. These childish statements prove their ignorance and prejudice. We hear such things from the writers who consider themselves as the great scholars after reading the description of the Hindu religion, given by the Christian missionaries, who do not see good in any other religion except their own, and who write

⁹ '*** it might be possible for this departing soul to manifest itself to its friends, either in the immediate vicinity, or even at a distance, ** manifestations of the departing spirit, at the moment of death, are by no means uncommon, but are, on the contrary, very numerous.—Carrington & Meader: *Death, Its Causes and Phenomena*, p. 382. Vide C: Flammarion: *The Unknown*, pp. 100, 108, 169-172 Cf: also the argument put forward against the atheistic theory denying the existence of soul apart from the body and after death in the *Pali Paysai Suttanta*, *Digha-Nikaya*, Vol. II.

simply to serve their own purposes. In the voluminous writings of the Hindus, however, you will never find a single sentence which teaches that the soul will be destroyed after death. On the contrary, you will read that the soul is eternal, immortal, deathless, and birthless. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, it is said:

'The soul of man is indestructible ; it cannot be pierced by sword ; fire cannot burn it ; air cannot dry it ; water cannot moisten it.'¹⁰

'If the slayer thinks that he has slain, or if the slain thinks that he is slain, both of them know not that the soul can neither slay nor be slain.'¹¹

Ralph Waldo Emerson, after reading the *Bhagavad Gita*, rendered this passage in verse in his poem entitled *Brahm*:

*If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.*¹²

As regards the retaining of the individuality, Vedanta says that each soul after death takes with it all the experiences, impressions, and ideas which it gained on earth. It takes its mind, intelligence, intellect, and powers of the senses and enjoys or reaps the fruits of its own thoughts and deeds.

If you read the funeral service of the Hindus, you will find that after the death of a person the relatives do good in the name of the departed, believing that good thoughts, prayers and good works, done in their names, will help the departed

¹⁰ नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मास्तः ॥
अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च ।
नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थानूरचलोऽयं सनातनः ॥

—भगवद्गीता २।२३-२४

¹¹ य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं यश्चैनं मन्यते हतम् ।
उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥

—भगवद्गीता २।१९.

¹² Vide Notes.

spirits. The Hindus also believe that, if we think of them constantly and invoke them asking to remain with us for our own gratification without of their good, we force them to remain confined to that particular personality which was connected with their earthly bodies they left behind them. Personality is always connected with the material body. At every birth of the body, we have a certain personality according to the environments, and if we keep one soul confined in one personality or one set of environments, there will be no progress of the soul on the higher planes. Therefore it is better not to drag our departed friends to our plane of existence, but to keep to help them by sending good thoughts to them.

The most ancient writers of the vedic ages show that they believed in the spirit world of the *Pitars* or fathers, where the departed souls go after death.¹³ The king or ruler of this place is called Yama. He was the first of the mortals to enter that world of death, and he became the ruler of those who came later.

The Hindus believe in a heaven, but not in any hell. Again the Hindu heaven is different from that of the Christian or of the Mohammedan. The Hindus believe that heaven is a realm where the departed souls go to reap the pleasant effects of their good and virtuous actions, that they remain there for sometime until the results of their good works are completely reaped, then after that period, they will return to this phenomenal world again.¹⁴ The Christians, Mohammedans, and Zoroastrians believe in a heaven of all kinds of sense enjoyments where pleasures will come incessantly without troubles or any sort of pain. This, according to the Hindus, is not a desirable state. The Hindus say that all these celestial enjoyments are phenomenal and transitory. Supposing a spirit remains in

¹³ प्रेहि प्रेहि पृथग्भिः पूर्वोभिर्यत्रा नः पूर्वे पितरः परेयुः ।

सं गच्छस्व पितृभिः संयमेनेष्टापूर्तेन परमे व्योमन् ।

—ऋग्वेद् १०।७

¹⁴ ते तं भ्रक्त्वा स्वर्गलोकं विशालं क्षीणे पुण्ये मर्त्यलोकं विशन्ति ।

एवं त्रैयोधर्म्यमनुप्रपन्ना गतागतं कामकामा लभन्ते ॥

—भगवद्गीता ९।२१

heaven and enjoy for a million years or for one cycle, still, compared to an eternity, this is a very short time. So they say that after enjoying the results of the good works in those realms, one is bound to be born again, either here, or in some other planet according to one's tendencies and capacities. Therefore in the *Bhagavad Gita* it is said:

'All the different worlds of spirits beginning with the highest heavens are state from where one must return.'¹⁵

Because they are within the realm of phenomena and are changeable. But he who attains to the realization of the absolute Truth, transcends all phenomena and laws which govern them.

The ancient Persians believed that the soul would rise three days after death and would go either to the heaven, or to the hell according to its thought, speech and work. This Persian idea of heaven was afterwards adopted by the Jews and the Christians. The ancient Hebrews did not trouble themselves about the life after death. They believed that God breathed life into man's nostrils, and that the breath which came from Jehovah, would go back to Him, and that the life-breath of all creatures would return to the source from whence it came. That which happens to man also happens to lower animals. This life-breath was sometimes called the *Nephesh*, the *Ruach*, or the *Neshama*.

The ancient Egyptians believed in a 'double' which was like a shadow of the body and which remained as long as the body remained. This gave rise to the idea of mummifying the bodies of the dead. If the body was injured in any part, the double or the soul was likewise injured. So to keep the soul intact, they preserved the bodies.

The ancient Chaldeans also believed in a 'double' which would be annihilated if the body were destroyed. They expected a resurrection of the corpse.¹⁶ Many of the Christians have a similar idea or belief. This idea gave rise to the custom of

¹⁵ अब्रह्मवनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।

मासुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥

emblaming and burying the dead. Some of the Christians still believe that the body will rise after death. Others do not believe in the resurrection of the body. They believe that the soul will remain and exist through eternity although it had a beginning. The Christian idea, regarding the beginning of the soul, is that, at the time of birth, each soul is newly created by the almighty God. But the Hindus say that which has a beginning, cannot live through all eternity, and it must have an end. The Hindus do not believe that the soul is created by God, or by any other supernatural being. It is eternal by its nature. It is birthless, and it cannot die. The Hindus do not mean destruction or annihilation by death¹⁷ They mean by it a change of the body, or the form. This kind of death is a constant attendant of life. The phenomenal life is impossible without death, or change of forms. In fact, we are dying every day. Every seventh year the entire body has changed with every particle and renewed atom.

Prof. Huxley says:

'Physiology writes over the portals of life, *Debmur morti nos nostraque*, with a profounder meaning than the Roman poet ascribed to the melancholy line. And in whatever guise it takes refuge, whether fungus or oak, worm or man, the living protoplasm not only ultimately dies and is resolved into its mineral and lifeless constituents, but is always dying, and, strange as the paradox may sound, could not live unless it died.'

Although every particle of the body changes, we still continue to exist. Our continuity is not broken from babyhood to old age—we retain the same sense of 'I' and personal identity. This continuity of the conscious agent or 'I' cannot be explained by any physical or chemical law. According to the Vedanta philosophy, thought or feeling or intelligence can never be produced by any mechanical or molecular motion. 'Motion produces

¹⁷ न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वाऽभविता वा न भूयः ।

अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥

—भगवद्गीता २।२० ; कठ उपनिषद् १।२।१८

motion and nothing else', says modern science. As such, how can the motion of the atoms of the body produce consciousness? That must be due to some lighter power or force. This force is ordinarily called the soul. The soul is not subject to the atomic or molecular changes in the body. It is rather the cause of them. It is beyond all changes, and, consequently, is beyond death. It is the basis of continuity of the conscious state and also of the sense of identity in the individual. As we survive and retain our individuality after each seven years of change and renewal, so we will live as individual souls after the final dissolution of the forms of our bodies. In the *Bhagavad Gita* it is said:

'As during our lifetime we survive the death of the baby body, the young body, and the mature body successively and retain our individuality, so after the death of the old body we shall survive, live, retain our individuality and continue to exist through eternity'.¹⁸

¹⁸ देहिनोऽस्मिन् यथा देहे कौमारं यावन्नं जरा ।

यथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥

—भगवद्गीता २।१३

CHAPTER III

THE SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF DEATH

In this age of commercialism and materialism, very few people think about death. They are rather afraid of it. They do not care to think what will happen after death. They would rather live in this world, enjoy all the pleasures of life, make the best use of everything, make a will, and insure their life, or save a little money to pay the funeral expenses and go on living. Out of the two thousand millions of people who inhabit this little planet earth, forty millions of the human bodies are disposed of every year, and a million tons of the human flesh, bones, and blood are allowed to return to their elementary states. During the last war in Europe,¹ many millions of people were killed and were destroyed. Some of them were blown into atoms. But we do not think of that horrible scene. We have almost forgotten it. So we do not think for a moment that we shall die. We are not living and doing the same things as we did before. Our interest is not in solving the problem of death, although it is the greatest mystery in the world. It is as mysterious as the coming of life on this plane. But still we do not think much about it. Even the Christian churches do not take such a lively interest in this problem of death today, as they did in the last century. They would rather busy themselves with questions of social, educational and especially political problems of the day. The medicine-men of this age do not solve the problem of death, although hundreds are dying in their hands every year. They gather all the things that they can, and their ideal is to enjoy the pleasures of life, and also to make the best of their opportunity.

In the *Mahabharata*, the most ancient epic of the Hindus, we read a prize question that was asked to different great men of ancient times. 'What is the most wonderful thing in the world?' Various answers were given, but they were not satisfactory. The answer which Yudhishtira gave, was accepted, and

¹ World War I.

his answer was this: 'Every day, and day after day, animals and human beings are passing out of life, but we do not think of death; we think that we shall never die. What can be more wonderful than this?'² This answer was given nearly thirty-five centuries ago, and the same truth prevails today. We do not think of death, although we see every day the dead bodies carried to the grave right under our eyes.

The mystery of death solved is not by mythological beliefs of the ancient peoples, which have been handed down to us through generations. The scriptures of the Jews, the Christians, the Parsees, and the Mohammedans do not explain what death is. But in some of these scriptures, we find that God commanded the first man to do certain things and not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, but when the first man did eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the Lord cursed him, and His curse brought death in this world. We read in the Genesis, the Lord commanded:

'Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.'³

Of course, Adam did not die in the day he was tempted and he ate the fruit thereof; but he reaped the consequences afterwards and died later. This passage shows that at first God did not intend that man should die, but the death came to the world through the evil influence of Satan, the devil. It was Satan who brought death into this world. In fact, the curse was the cause, but the curse was brought about by the evil influence of the devil. Those who believe in this that death was caused or brought about by Satan, do not care to think further about it. They leave this question as settled, and naturally they do other things, and do not try to solve the problem. They think that if it be the curse of God, it is an inevitable end of life, and let us be satisfied with it.

Scientific researches towards tracing the causes of death have brought out many truths and laws which were unknown to the

² अह्न्याहनि भूतानि गच्छन्ति यममन्दिरम् ।

शेषास्थिरत्वमिच्छन्ति किमाश्चर्यमतःपरम् ॥—महाभारतम्

³ Vide Chapter II, 16 and 17.

writers of the Genesis and other scriptures of different nations. Orthodox science or materialistic science, as it is known to us, which denies the existence of the soul as an entity and also denies the existence of mind or life or intelligence as distinct from the results of matter, governed by physical forces and chemical actions, says that death is nothing but the cessation of life and it is an inevitable end which all beings come to. The scientists do not explain it elaborately, because they do not know much about it. Still they try to explain that when the vital parts of the body wear out in this machine, then naturally the whole of the machine must stop. The vital parts are regarded as the heart, the lungs, and the brain. When any of these vital centres is worn out or injured by disease or accident, then naturally the whole machinery of the body stops.

But here a question may arise: 'Does the death of the conscious life imply the death of the life of the organs?' Or, in other words, when a person is dead, does it mean that the organs are dead also? That is a very difficult question to answer. On the contrary, science tells us that the organs do not die immediately after the death of the body or the conscious life. For instance, if a chicken's head be cut off and its heart taken out and watched, it will continue to live for a long time after the death of the chicken. In the Rockefeller Institute, there is a heart of a chicken that has been kept for eight years, and it is still going on and doing normal action. That shows that the organs have their independent life which may continue to live even after the conscious life of the individual is dead. In the same manner, it can be shown that the cells and the tissues have their own life. They do not die, but they live for a long time after the death of the conscious life. Modern science tells us that there are two kinds of death: one is the death of the conscious life, and the other is the death of the organic and cellular life which is called the 'somatic life'. But one does not depend upon the other. In fact, the life continues to exist, depending upon the natural process of the vital force which is known as the life-force. But this materialistic science does not explain how it is that the organs, the cells, and the tissues continue to live, because it denies the existence of a vital energy, or a vital force, as distinct from all other known forces of nature. On the other hand, it considers that this

vital force is a result of the chemical actions of the atoms and molecules of the organism, and, therefore, it cannot explain any further.

Professor Charles Minot of the Harvard Medical School writes in his book, *Old Age, Growth and death*:

'Differentiation leads, as its inevitable conclusion, to death. Death is the price we are compelled to pay for our organization, and also for the differentiation which exists in us. Death of the whole comes, as we now know, whenever some essential part of the body gives way. Sometimes one, sometimes another, perhaps the brain, perhaps the heart, perhaps one of the other internal organs may be the first, in which the change of cytomorphosis goes so far that it can no longer perform its share of work, and failing, brings about the failure of the whole'.

This is the scientific view of death. It leaves death with its mystery and all its sacredness. We are not in the least able at the present time to say what life is, and still less, perhaps, what death is.

Thus by studying materialistic science, we do not gain a very clear idea of what death really means. But science goes on trying to trace the causes of death, and describes the signs of death. Science tells us that the actual signs of death are very difficult to find. The so-called popular signs of death like the stoppage of the heart-beat and pulse or respiration are not the actual signs of death, because there have been hundreds of cases where the heart-beat is stopped and the respiration is stopped and yet after sometime they are revived. The heart-beat might stop for many hours, even for days, and then it can be revived. The respiration might stop for a long time, but it can be restored. Science has recorded many cases of suspended animation where the respiration of the heart-beat is stopped for forty-eight hours in the least. But there have been other cases where men have been buried alive in a hermetically sealed box for forty days and afterwards they were taken out and revived. They lived, married, and enjoyed all the blessings of life afterwards. It is very difficult to say which would be the proper or final sign of death. Science tells us that the decomposition and putrefaction are the only final signs of death and nothing

else, and that shows that people might be buried prematurely. There have been many cases of premature burial, recorded in the medical journals of the world every year. And for that reason, some of the countries in Europe have passed a law that no one should be buried immediately after death until decomposition sets in. Because it is a very serious thing to bury the living beings. There have been cases of many prematurely killed by putting them into the coffin and burying them under the ground.

As the premature burial is objectionable, so the premature embalming is objectionable. The embalmers have killed many before they really died. They might have been revived and might have lived for a long time. Because it is a proved fact today that when the person is considered as dead, he might be in a trance, or in a state of catalepsy, or in a state of ecstasy.

Trance, catalepsy and ecstasy are the conditions which resemble death. The outward signs are similar. But what happens to the soul after trance or ecstasy? Science does not know, because it denies the existence of a soul other than the mind. A person might go into a state of trance and remain in that state for hours. There are persons who can stop the heart-beat by their will. I know a Hindu Yogi who came to America a few years ago and who, in New York, went through all the medical tests to prove that he could stop his heart-beat at his will. The medical practitioners were all dumbfounded, and questioned how he could do it. It is possible, because it obeys the will of the individual, and the individual will commands and directs the organic functions. But materialistic science cannot explain how it is possible through the known laws that are accepted by these scientific thinkers.

The old Babylonian method of emblaming the body⁴ and burning the dead, which has been handed down to us from pre-Christian era and which is practised today in all the civilized countries, is based upon the superstitious belief that the body will eventually rise and go to heaven. But after the decomposition sets in and the body is gone, what will rise? Science shows that it is an absolute impossibility for the body to rise, or to go to heaven. Still some people cling to that old belief

⁴ Vide Notes

and think that their friends and relatives will eventually rise from the graves and go to heavens with their physical bodies. But the best method of disposing of the dead body is the method of cremation, because it is sanitary. It is the best method from the standpoint of health as well as from the standpoint of safety for the living beings. Why should we have so many dead bodies going through the process of decomposition around us? It is better to get rid of them and let them go to their elementary conditions. This cremation has been practised in India from very ancient times. In the Vedas, we find that cremation was regarded as the best method.⁵ But among other nations, burial or mummification was regarded as the best method. As I have already said that their idea was to keep the body intact for a long time, because the soul will eventually come back to the body. The Egyptians also had that kind of belief. They believed that if the physical body were kept intact and not mutilated, then the soul would eventually come back to dwell in that body, whereas if any part of the physical body was mutilated, that part of the 'double' (soul) would also be mutilated. They believed in a 'double',—a double exactly of the same shape and same form as the physical body. In India, we find that the Hindus have a belief in the existence of a double, but it was not dependent upon the gross physical body. They have a philosophy altogether different from that of the Egyptians and other nations of ancient times. They believe that this double might have the body and continue to live even when this gross physical body is destroyed through the process of cremation which they even now regard as the most sanitary method of disposing of the dead body.

There is another class of scientific thinkers who are a little more advanced than the orthodox scientists. They hold that the mind is a factor in cases of disease and death. They do not deny the existence of the mind, or the intelligence, or the consciousness, nor do they believe that the mind, intelligence, and consciousness are the results of the chemical actions of the atoms and the molecules of the organism. On the contrary, they hold the belief that the source of consciousness and mind are indestructible. So is life. Life is also indestructible. They regard

⁵ Vide Notes.

that the life-force (*prana*) is not the result of the chemical actions. It is not the same as electricity or any other force that is known to orthodox science, but it is distinct and separate. They give the cases where mind can bring death through extreme emotions. Some of the functions of the mind which we call passions, will create disease and death.

Dr. John Hunter, a noted psychologist, was a genius of extraordinary nature. He was a scientist, but he believed in the power of the mind, and yet he had very little control over his passions. He could not control anger. Once he had extreme anger as the result of a slight provocation, and through the extreme anger, he instantly fell dead. There is a historical record that anger kills the person instantly. The French physician, Tourtelle, witnessed two women who died of extreme anger. The extreme anger will produce stoppage of the heart-action, and poison the whole system. As extreme anger will kill persons; a slight expression of anger, or anger of a milder form, will also bring disease of the worst kind. In fact, when a mother nurses the baby while she is in that state of anger, she feeds the baby with poison, and that poison works and creates all kinds of trouble in the baby's system. It is a scientific fact today.

As anger is dangerous and is a destructive force that creates a havoc in the system, so is fear. Now, the ordinary expression that we are frightened to death, has some meaning. The extreme fear will bring death, will stop the heart-action, and will stop the lungs and simultaneously other organs too. Then there are passions, hatred, and grief. Grief will produce a havoc in the system. These are all the recorded facts. When there have been cases of disease and death through extreme hatred and grief, how can we deny the power of the mind? If the mind and the mental states can produce such effects upon the physical body and bring premature death, how can we deny the existence of the mind as the most powerful thing that we possess? Therefore, the scientists, who are advanced thinkers and not bigoted like the orthodox materialists, regard mind as the most wonderful force that is working through this physical body.

There are cases of counterfeits of death, even in the lower animals. There are some of the insects which would feign

death. The fox, when he is pursued by an enemy and does not know how to escape, lies flat on the ground and feigns death and remains in that state for some time. There are other animals which would even become stiff and the *rigor mortis* of death will be perceptible in the physical body of the animal. It can be produced by the mind. This counterfeit of death may be caused by different things, such as intoxication, apoplexy, heart-trouble, and so on. Thus it shows that mind can produce these things under those conditions like the sign of death, and, therefore, those advanced thinkers and scientists consider that death can be brought about by the power of the mind. They regard that this ordinary state which we call death, is caused by that self-conscious living force which is working through the organs, and when that self-conscious living force is detached, it produces death. In fact, the self-conscious living soul has vital energy or life-force (*prana*) or mind with it. The mind is inseparable from the life-force or vital energy. But mind cannot work unless it has an instrument. Therefore it manufactures the instrument of the physical body. It draws from the surrounding environments like atoms, molecules or particles of matter, and charges them with the life-force, or the vibrations of the *prana*, and when the vibrations of life-force are weak and are not up to the standard of the conditions of life, then the living soul or the self-conscious mind tries to raise those vibrations of the cellular life up to the standard by making all efforts, and if it fails to raise the standard of the vibration of the cells and the tissues, then there is the death of the whole. Then the whole machinery dies.

Thus we see that there are two principal factors in the body: the one is the mind and the other is the vibration of the *prana*, or the vibratory state of the cells and tissues of the body. But the vibratory state of the cells and the tissues is governed by the mind. In fact, the mind is the creator, the manipulator and the organizer. It is the director of all the organic functions. The organs might go on vibrating in their own way, but that would not be the standard of life. There must be co-ordination. The heart-action must correspond in a certain way with the action of the lungs, and all the intricate mechanism must be adjusted in such a way that one helps the other. Otherwise, there would be no life. If one screw is loose

anywhere, the screw must be tightened, otherwise the machine would not work. Now, who tightens this screw? It is the individual self-conscious life-force which is called, in ordinary terms, the living soul. The living soul means the self-conscious individualized life-force with the sense of 'I', and that sense of 'I' holds them together. This sense of 'I' holds all together, unifies them, and makes the separate parts vibrate and produce a perfect harmony. That harmony is life. As in an orchestra, there might be a hundred instruments, and if each instrument goes on playing in its own way without following the direction of its conductor, it will produce no harmony; similarly, if the organs of the body go on beating in their own way, without producing any harmony, without having any co-ordination, without being directed by their conductor, then it is useless. Who is the conductor of the organs? Who is the director? The orthodox science does not see that director, but advanced science tells us that there is a director and this director has the absolute control over the whole organism. He is the living soul. At the time of death, he disconnects himself from the organs and leaves the body.

In case of trance, catalepsy, and ecstasy, this living soul leaves the body, but the connection is not entirely cut off. There still remains some kind of connection. It is like the umbilical cord of a newborn babe which holds this entity as connected with the physical body. Therefore the physical body can be revived. But when the connection is entirely cut off, the body cannot be revived. Then it is called death. That is the difference. This difference very few people understand.

But this living soul which goes out of the body at the time of death, can be photographed. The most delicate and sensitive instruments have been used to weigh the body just before death and immediately after death, and making all allowances for the gases that escape, it has been found that the substance which passes out of the body at the time of death, has a definite weight of about half an ounce or three-quarters of an ounce.

This fine substance that emanates from the body at the time of death, has a luminosity and this luminous substance is photographed and can be seen by the psychic as passing out of the body. The whole body becomes enshrouded with a kind

of luminous mist. I remember the case of a girl, whose brother died in Los Angeles some years ago. I heard it from her mother. At the death-bed of her brother, the young girl said: "Mamma, mamma, see, there is a mist around his body; what is it?" But the mother could not see it. She said that it came out of the body. The scientists have taken up that subject in Europe and are experimenting on this emanation. They call it the *ectoplasm*. It is a vapourlike substance and it has no particular form. It is like a cloud and it can take a shape or a form and can be photographed. What substance it is, they do not know, but they cannot deny its existence.

Our human bodies are emanating that substance all the time. It can be seen especially at the time when there is a medium in a trancelike condition. The materializing mediums emanate that very strongly. I have seen it in private seances, when there was no professional medium at all. I have handled it and touched it. There is no particular feeling when we feel *ectoplasm*. It cannot be described. But when it takes a definite shape, it becomes almost like solid and like of our own body. It can take any form.

At the time of death, all these vital forces that are governing the different organs, become concentrated and centralized into one point before it leaves the body, and we find the dying persons's sight becomes dim, and the sensations of the body become faint, and gradually the whole body is going through a transformation. And, in this transformation, there are cases, where the psychic power of the individual manifests. Some of the dying persons develop the clairvoyance and the clairaudience. They can appear just at the time of death, either before or immediately after, to the distant friends in the form of an apparition, and they can give their messages. Such cases have been recorded by the scientists. The French Astronomer, Camille Flammarion had written a book, *The Unknown*, on that subject by gathering all the authentic reports, made under the test conditions in different families, which describe the experience of different people immediately at the time of death, or after death. Fifteen hundred such records were gathered, and afterwards Flammarion selected quite a few out of them, which were absolutely authentic, and published them in his book. Now these records show that there is something which is not the

result of the physical body. This *ectoplasm* is a substance, which contains finer matter in vibration, and this finer matter forms the under-garment of the soul, and the gross physical body and the finer or etherial body which exists in each one of us. We may not feel it at present, because our sight and senses are looking for the gross, material, and tangible objects. But it does not become tangible until it is brought down to the planes of our senses. The plane of our senses depends upon a certain degree of vibration. We can see light when the vibration of light is within the range of our vision. From red to violet our eyes can see, but if there be less vibrations than the red, we do not see it. In order to become visible, it must vibrate in a certain way so that our organs might catch it, just as sound. Thus there are sounds which we do not hear at all, because our organ of hearing is imperfect. Similarly the etherial body cannot be seen, until it is brought within the range of our vision, by a process known as materialization. It is a process which brings the fine matter that is vibrating at a high rate or into a lower rate of vibration so that we can catch it or get a glimpse of it.

The Vedanta philosophy is in perfect harmony with the conclusions of this latter kind of advanced scientists who hold that mind and the living soul are distinct factors in creating disease also in bringing on death and in manufacturing the physical body. These ideas we find in the Vedanta philosophy which is the oldest system of philosophy in the world. The truth never grows old. The truth that was discovered five thousand years ago, is the same truth today, even if it be re-discovered by the modern scientists. So we must remember that the vedantic truth is unique and one. There is only one condition which can be absolutely true. The others are imitations of truth. That absolute truth might have been discovered ages before, but because of the lapse of time, the truth does not change. It is the eternal truth. Therefore, we find that this finer body which I have just described, is called in Vedanta the subtle body (*sukshma-sharira*) which is the under-garments of the soul, and the gross physical is the outer garment. When the soul has performed certain functions and enjoyed certain pleasure and fulfilled certain desires, it finds that this gross physical body is no longer of any use and it does not work right.

Then the living soul leaves the gross body and manufactures another. Just as you have run a motor-machine for two years, and after two years, you find that the parts are worn-out and that it has done its service, then you leave it and get another. That is exactly what the living soul does. You cannot blame the soul for doing that. Because the body is the instrument, through which the soul must manifest its powers, gain experiences, and earn lessons, and gather knowledge. In this way, the living soul is progressing in the process of evolution, rising from a lower to a higher state and fulfilling its mission at every step of manifestation.

This idea of life will explain the mystery of death. Death is no longer mysterious when we know that there is an entity which has manufactured this instrument and which is dwelling in it and which leaves it when the time comes. So death does not mean the annihilation of anything, or destruction, or reduction into nothingness of anything, but it means disintegration. It means that the instrument which has served its purpose, must be thrown away and another instrument must be rebuilt out of the same material. Who can tell that the atoms and molecules which made up the body of Cleopatra thousands of years ago, are not used in the bodies of the living beings today? The same atoms and molecules that are buried with the dead bodies, have been dissolved and taken up by the vegetable life and have reappeared in the forms of plants cereals, and we might be eating them and taking them in again. And they are forming parts of our own body. So it is a revolution. Nothing in this universe is destroyed. The atoms and the molecules go into one body, get out, and enter into another body. In this continuous process of life, its manifestations of evolution and involution are going on and the living soul is the master of it. That living soul has no death. Science tells us that which has existed once, will continue to exist for ever. But the physical form of the body will be destroyed. It has no existence and it is constantly changing. The form that you had when you were a little baby, is gone. The form that you had yesterday, you have not got today. The form that you have this minute, you will not have it next minute. It is a continuous influx and reflux of matter. It is just like a whirlpool. The particles of matter are revolving and keeping up the shape according to

the type that you have manufactured so that there would be an identity.

Now, in this vortex of the particles of the matter, which are constantly in motion, there is something that is constant and unchangeable within us. That is our consciousness. If you ever see your own hand or any part of the body through X-ray, you will find like a revelation that your body consists of the finer particles of the mist-like matter which are hanging over the outline of the bones. The gross physical body which appears as solid, is not at all solid. It is just like a cloud, and we think it is solid only under certain conditions. At the time of death, the soul leaves this material plane and enters into another plane of consciousness which may be called another dimension. We are now living in three dimensions. There is another dimension where the sense-objects do not exist at all. It is beyond the limitations of our physical body. Even the motion of the earth and the planetary system do not exist there. We cannot imagine such a state, unless we get a glimpse of that other dimension. It is called the fourth dimension.⁶ Where does the human soul go? It does not go anywhere after death, but it remains in the fourth dimension and cuts off all connections with the physical world of three dimensions. The third and the fourth dimensions are related to each other, just like a wheel within a wheel. We know through the study of science that the cells of the body are constantly moving. But do we feel that motion? When we sit still, we are enjoying the quiet. But there is a constant motion going on within our system which we are not conscious of. So the departed soul is not conscious of the changes and the conditions of the gross physical body.

Our bodies are nothing but the instruments, or the garments of the soul. Vedanta tells us that when a person dies, he is not really dead, but he changes his old garment of the physical body and takes a new one. Vedanta says that death means a change i.e. a change from one state of consciousness to another state of consciousness, and the soul throws away the physical body at the time of death just as we throw away our

⁶ Some imagine five to seven dimensions. Dimensions are known as the layers of thought or mind, and each dimension has a special experience of its own.

old worn-out garments. This idea is beautifully expressed in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

‘As we throw away our old worn-out garments and put on new ones, so the living soul, after using the body which is the gross physical garment, throws it away when it is worn-out, and manufactures a new one.’”

‘ वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
 नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।
 तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णां
 न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥

—भगवद्गीता २।२२

CHAPTER IV

THE SOUL AFTER DEATH

The question what becomes of the human soul after death, is as old as the first appearance of man on the earth. Almost all nations and tribes of all climes and ages have asked this question amongst themselves and tried to solve the problem each according to its power, capacity, understanding, and knowledge. Some tried to explain it through peculiar theories and beliefs; some through mythology, or poetry, and others through proper reasoning and scientific and logical demonstration. These various attempts of different thinkers, to solve that ancient problem, have ended in different conclusions which satisfy more or less the minds of various peoples in different countries. All the religions of the world are built upon the solution of this great puzzle. All the philosophies, ancient or modern, and even science of today, have spared no pains to unriddle that enigma of existence. Many have failed, and many have stopped after deep investigations and researches, without finding any satisfactory explanation, and have at last cried out in despair: it is beyond our knowledge, and it is beyond the reach of human understanding. Some have become agnostics and others have denied the existence of any such thing as soul. Some said that the soul of man exists as long as the body and the combination of matter which produces the soul, exists. When the body dies, the soul is also dead and gone. Some have arrived at the conclusion that there is no such thing as an individuality. It is like the flame of a lamp.¹ When there is no lamp, there is no light; similarly when there is no body, there is no soul left. Everything ends with the death of the body. No sign of individuality is left after the dissolution of the physical form or the gross body. But after hearing all these various conclusions, does our mind stop to ask the same question within ourselves again and again? No, because each individual needs an explanation which will satisfy the innate longing for the im-

¹ Vide Notes.

mortal or deathless life, with which each one of us is born. If we hear millions of times that there is no soul, still we cannot be convinced entirely that we shall cease to exist after death. We cannot think of such a state, and we cannot believe that our individuality will be lost after death. Such solutions do not appeal to our reason, and do not satisfy our mind, nor do they bring to us consolation of any kind. In the *Katha Upanishad*, we find that Yama, the Ruler of death says:

'Fools dwelling in the darkness of ignorance, self-conceited with vain knowledge and puffed up with the idea that they are truly wise, go round and round like the blind led by the blind'¹² 'Hereafter never rises before the mind of an ignorant child, deluded by the desire or wealth and worldly prosperity. Such people who say: 'This is the world, there is no other,' come again and again under my sway.'¹³

These words were uttered perhaps more than a thousand years before the birth of Jesus. One of the principle features of the writings of the ancient Seers of Truth in India was the knowledge of pre-existence, continuity and immortality of the human soul. If we see the most ancient writings, I mean the Rig Veda, there we read such prayers which show that they believed in the existence of the soul after death and immortal life. In the *Isha-Upanishad* of the *Sukla-Yayur-Veda*, we find also,

'Oh God ! take me there where lies the source of everlasting light of the universe, which is indestructible, where immortality reigns supreme and make me immortal.'¹⁴

¹² जविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः, स्वयं धीराः पण्डितन्मन्यमानाः ।

दन्द्रम्यमाणाः परिरयन्ति मूढा, अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः ॥

—कठ उपनिषद्, १।२।५

¹³ न साम्परायः प्रतिभाति बालं, प्रमद्यन्तं भित्तमोहेन मूढम् ।

अयं लोको नास्ति पर इति मानी, पुनः पुनर्वशमापद्यते मे ॥

—कठ उपनिषद्, १।२।६

¹⁴ अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान्, विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ;

सुयोध्यस्मज्जहुराणमेनो, भूयिष्ठां ते नम-उक्तिमं विधेम ।

—ईश उपनिषद्, १।१।८

In a funeral hymn we read:

'Go forth, go forth on these ancient paths on which our forefathers departed, having left all sins, go home again and radiant in thy body, come together with them.'⁵

There are hundreds of such passages in the Vedas, which show clearly that the ancient Aryas believed in the existence of the soul after death. They believed in the spirit-world of the fathers or *Pitris* where the departed soul goes after death, and the king of that world of the fathers is Yama, the first of the mortals who become immortal.

The ancient Hindus believed in a heaven which they called the *brahmaloka* or the kingdom of Brahma, the Creator and the Father of the universe. Then gradually when the ethical ideas of right and wrong became very strong in the minds of the Hindus and when they understood the law of action and reaction, they believed that those who perform good and virtuous deeds in this life with the hope of getting reward, go to the realm of the fathers (*pitriloka*) and stay there as long as the results of good works will not be finished. When a departed individual has reaped the fruits of all of his good and virtuous works which brought him to that realm, he is bound to come down to the earth and to be born again, according to his desires and action of his past birth. The spirit-world of the fathers was supposed to be in the moon. From the very ancient times the Hindus had a belief that the moon was the land of the dead, and it was the repository of all the departed souls, and all the germs of life came to this earth from the moon. It rained from the moon on this earth. The path, by which the departed souls go to the lunar region and enjoy there all the pleasures and happiness as a result of their own works and then return to the earth and are born again, was called the *pitriyana*, or the path of the forefathers.⁶ All mortals are bound to go by this path and return to this earth.

* प्रेहि प्रेहि पथिभिः पूर्वैभि यत्रा नः पूर्वै पितरः परेयः ;

उभा राजान स्वधया मदन्ता, यमं पश्यासि वरुणं च देवम् ।

—ऋग्वेद् १०।२४।७।९

* सम्भवत्सरो वै प्रजापतिस्तस्यायने दक्षिणमोत्तराह, तद् ये ह वै तदिष्टापूर्तं कृतमित्युपासते, ते चान्द्रमसमेव लोकं अभिजायन्ते । 'ते एव पुनरावर्तन्ते*** ।'

— प्रश्न उपनिषद् १।९

But those who do good works not for getting reward, nor seeking anything on return and who live the life of purity and righteousness, will go to the *brahmaloka*, the realm of Brahma. There they will stay in all glory until the end of a cycle of evolution. In the meantime, if any one of them can attain the knowledge of the highest wisdom of oneness which is the absolute Reality, he will be free and will remain as one with the supreme Being all through eternity. Brahma, the Creator, who is the king of this realm of the gods, will in the end of one cycle be free. Then in the beginning of another cycle, another Brahma will arise from the infinite source of the absolute existence, intelligence and bliss. He will be the Creator or Projector of that cycle. This process will continue all the time. This Brahma the Creator is like the Governor of a state. One fills the post for sometime, does his duty, then retires. Another, in the meantime becomes a candidate to be the Brahma, and so he becomes. In this way, hundreds of Brahmas have come and gone. But those who after attaining this realm of the gods do not gain the highest wisdom of oneness, and come back at the beginning of the new cycle to this earth, and according to their desires and works they will be born again as the human beings of the highest order. Most righteous and virtuous will strive for the highest knowledge, or the realization of oneness. This is what they called *devayana*, the path of the *devas* or the bright ones. These two paths are described fully in the *Upanishads* in a metaphorical language, which is generally difficult to understand. They describe how the departed souls go from this earth to those regions, what stages they pass through, what experiences they gather, how they return, and how they are born, and so forth. Those who go by *pitriyana*, or the path of the departed fathers, are such people who are charitable, do good to others, and perform the virtuous deeds. When such people die, they go through smoke, then to night, then to dark fifteen days, from there to the six months when the sun moves south, from there to the world of the fathers, from the world of the fathers to moon.⁷

⁷ * * ते घूममभिसंभवन्ति, घूमाद्रात्रिम्, रात्रेरपक्षीयमाणपक्षम् अपक्षीयमाण-
पक्षाद्यान् यन्मासान् दक्षिणादित्य एति, मासेभ्यः पितृलोक्कम्, पितृलोकाच्चन्द्रम्, ते चन्द्रं

These are the principal stages like smoke, night, and dark fifteen days, and each of these has a spirit as its ruler. These spirits take care of the departed souls and help them as guides do in a strange country. Each of these spirits introduces them to the other spirits, and thus they go very quickly to their proper destinations. There they will meet their relatives and departed friends. There they will become favourite of the gods and live there as long as their works will permit. Then when they return, 'they first take ethereal invisible bodies (like minute germs of life), then they pass through ether into air, from air into the clouds, and then they fall with rain drops on the earth, then they enter into human bodies through some kinds of food ; then they are born again.'⁸ In this process, you must remember that the law of what the modern evolutionists call the natural selection, acts, and by that law they will come through food into such bodies where they will find suitable environments and conditions to fulfil their desire and to reap the results of their own works. During this process of return, their whole mental feelings and intelligence become contracted, and they do not feel anything, nor can they remember anything. Then they become good or bad according to their latent tendencies which they possess and which they want to manifest.

प्राप्यन्नं भवन्ति, तांस्तत्र देवा यथा सोमं राजानमाप्यायस्वापक्षीवस्वेति, एवमेनांस्तत्र भक्षयन्ति, * * कीटाः पतङ्गाः यदिहं दन्दसूक्ष्मम् ।

—वृहदारण्यक उपनिषद् ६।२।५६

Vide also *Devayana* in *Rig Veda*, X. 19.1, *Pitriyana* in *Rig Veda*, X. 2.1 Cf. *Kausitaki Upanishad*, 1.4

* (क) मासेम्यः पितृलोकं पितृलोकोदाकाशं आकाशचन्द्रमसम् ; एष सोमो राजा, तद्देवानामन्नं, तं देवा भक्षयन्ति ॥४॥ तस्मिन् यावत् सम्पातमुषित्वा अथैतमेवाच्चानं पुनर्निवर्तते यथेतं आकाशम्, आकाशाद्वायुं, वायुर्भूत्वा धूमो भवति, धूमो भूत्वा अन्नं भवति ॥५॥ अन्नं भूत्वा मेघो भवति मेघो, भूत्वा प्रवर्षति, ते इह द्रोहि-यवा ओषधि वनस्पतस्त्रि-भाषा इति जायन्ते ; अतो वै खलु दुर्निष्प्रपतरम्, यो यो ह्यन्नमति, यो रेतः सिञ्चति, तद्भूय एव भवति ॥६॥

—छान्दोग्य उपनिषद् ५।२.०।४—६

(ख) वृहदारण्यक उपनिषद् ६।२।१६

ever that might be, one thing, which we learn from all these descriptions, is that those ancient thinkers understood that the soul cannot be destroyed after death, and that it has some purpose to fulfil, and that it must continue to manifest either on this earth or in some other planet according to its desires and works, and that all these heavens are transitory and not the unchangeable Reality. This is a great gain indeed. In a very few religions, you will find such an idea. All religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Christianity or Mohammedanism, end in going to heaven, and they describe heaven as the eternal and imperishable place. But the Hindu religion does not teach that. In other religions, the highest ideal is going to a heaven where we can get many things which we cannot get here, and where all enjoyments will come incessantly without any pain or trouble. But with the Hindus this is not the desirable highest state. All these heavens and places of enjoyments are phenomenal and transitory (even if they last for millions of years, still millions of years when compared to eternity is nothing). It is for this reason Sri Krishna, the Incarnation of the universal Spirit, says to Arjuna:

‘All the different worlds of spirits, gods and others, beginning with the highest heaven of Brahma are places from where one must return, but he who attains me the supreme Spirit, will remain with Me for ever, will never be bound by any law of nature.’¹¹

Therefore in Vedanta, you do not find any special value of these heavens, nor does it deny its existence. Of course, in the heavens, the soul will stand face to face with God before His throne, and God will ask him: ‘Who art thou?’ The soul will answer: ‘What Thou art that I am’. But along with the higher conceptions of Vedanta, all these heavens and desires for heavens gradually become quite insignificant¹² This idea

¹¹ आब्रह्ममुबनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।

मासुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥—भगवद्गीता, ८।१६

¹² In the *Sankhaya-Aranyaka* (Ch. III, 1-7), we find it is described in a beautiful way. There the king Gangayani (Gargayani?) said to Aruni and his son Svetaketu. ‘Those who depart from this world all go to the moon. Their breaths swell the first fortnight (of the moon); in the second it brings them to birth again. The moon is also the door of the world of

of a personal God, sitting on a throne and receiving the pious souls, we find in the ancient writings of the Hindus, I mean in the Vedas.

In the Zend Avesta, we find a similar idea of a personal God, Ahura Mazda, sitting on a throne and judging the conduct of the departed souls and rewarding or punishing them accordingly. The Hindus did not believe at first in any hell, but the Parsees did. In the Avesta, we read what happens when a man dies¹³. The ideas of heaven and hell which we find in the Avesta influenced to a great extent the Jewish and later Mohammedan idea of heaven through the Jews. We know that the Old Testament is silent about the fate of the soul after death. In the New Testament, however, we find such ideas which perfectly coincide with the Persian descriptions. The Persians believe in the last day of judgment and a general resurrection when the victory of good over evil will be secured. The ancient Hebrews did not bother their head much about what becomes of the soul after death. They believed that as God breathed life into man that breath, which they called *Nephesh*, or *Neshama*, or *Ruach*, came from God and returned to him after the death of the body. But afterwards when the Jews came in contact with the Persians, they accepted their ideas. The Egyptians, as has been said before, had a belief that the soul of man is a 'double' like a shadow which remains as long as the body remains, but if the body be mutilated or destroyed then the soul will be mutilated and destroyed.

The Chaldeans also believed in a 'double' which will be annihilated if the bodies were destroyed. They expected a resurrection of the corpse. This belief we find amongst the Christians of today. The Greek philosophers, Pythagoras, Plato and their disciples believed in the immortality of the soul and in the theory of transmigration. Plato's ideas regard-

heaven. ** it rains down on earth, becoming itself rain. ** Him, when he has arrived, it asks 'Who art thou?' To it should he reply, 'From the light I came as seed, O seasons, from that produced as the fifteen-fold father-land. ** I am born and again born as the twelve-month (year) and the thirteen-month (year), from the twelve-fold, the thirteen-fold father. I know this and I recognize this. Then do ye bear me, seasons, to deathlessness. By that truth that penance, I am the season of the seasons.' 'Who art thou?' 'I am Thou' He then sends him on." Cf: also *Kaushitaki-Brahmanyopanishad*, 1.1-6.

¹³ Vide Notes.

ing the nature of the soul and his descriptions about what becomes after death are exactly the same as we find in the *Upanishads*. But Plato believed in a place of punishment for the evil-doers. Those who have done wicked deeds and sinful acts, will go through sufferings and penalties, and when they are purified will obtain rewards for their good deeds and virtuous acts. Plato believed that the human soul may migrate to a human body, or to a beast and may return again to a human body.

Thus there are many speculations regarding the future existence. Now let us understand clearly what Vedanta has to say on this point. In the first place, Vedanta says that there is no such thing as death which means destruction. It admits death in the sense of a change of the forms. This kind of death is a constant attendant of life. Life is impossible without death which means the changes of the forms. It has been said before that we are dying every moment, and after every seven years it is said that our bodies completely renew all its constitutive elements. But still the form is preserved. Although every particle of the body is changed, still we continue to exist. Our continuity is not broken, and we remember things and events that happened fourteen or twentyone years ago. This continuity of the conscious agent cannot be explained by any physical or chemical laws. Then again Vedanta gives a death blow to the materialistic theory by saying that thought or feeling or intelligence can never be produced by any mechanical or molecular motion. Motion produces motion and nothing else. Therefore motion of the atoms of the body will never produce feeling of the conscious state, but it is due to some other higher power which we call the thought-force, or the soul-power.

That power is neither yours, nor mine, but it exists in the nature. The whole universe is like an ocean of one living substance which contains the soul power and the source of intelligence and consciousness. Our present consciousness is a reflection or manifestation of that infinite source of consciousness. In this ocean of the source of consciousness, there are rising innumerable waves of consciousness. If we study it minutely, we will see that each wave will continue to move on and on, and if the ocean be infinite, it will never stop, and it will move on from eternity to eternity and ultimately it will come back

to the same place from where it started. Similarly our individual lives are nothing but so many individual waves of that infinite ocean. As each wave is moving onward to complete the infinite circle, so each one of us has a beginningless past and endless future. The so-called surface scientists of today do not admit it. They are very busy in thinking of the race, or of the species. They ignore the fact that if there were no individuals, there would not have been any race or species. The race, or the species, is an abstract concept which exists in our mind. It is the result of our generalization, while the individuals are the undeniable facts of the nature. Each of these waves start as the simple germs of life which contain all the potentialities and will be manifested in future and try to make those potentialities into actualities by expression or manifestation through the various forms. The process, by which it expresses, is called 'evolution' which means the change of the forms. This manifestation would have been impossible, if the forms were not changed, and if the old forms were not thrown aside the new forms were not developed. Such being the case, this change of form is what we call death. Death is death of a particular form and not of the substance, nor of the force. Death of one form reproduces, or gives birth to another form as death of the seed-form produces the tree-form, and so forth. Again that which is reproduced, will die, then reproduce another, and so on.

Therefore Vedanta says that which has birth, must die, and that which is dead, must be born again¹⁴. But there is no birth or death in the soul life. The soul life is eternal and immortal. It takes that form which it wants to take. The outward form has its cause in the mental form, and the mental or thought form is the result of our desire, or craving, or intense longing. So our future life will be determined by our desires, tendencies, longings, and works we do. Vedanta does not care for heaven or hell. It says that those who want to go to heaven, will create a heaven, and will go there and enjoy. Those who think of hell, will see hell. Those who think that they are sinners, are really sinners. What thou thinkest, thou shalt become. So all these heavens and hells are the different conditions of our mind. They do not exist outside. As long as we are in the state of

¹⁴ जातस्य हि ब्रुवोमृत्युं घृष्टं जन्म मृतस्य च ।

—भगवद्गीता, २।२७

ignorance, we have such dreams. But when we realize oneness of our real nature with the universal Spirit, we are free from birth or death, and heaven or hell. Then our real nature returns to its pure conditions and reigns in its own glory all through eternity.

CHAPTER V

REBIRTH OF THE SOUL

Rebirth of the soul presupposes an existence of an intelligent entity, and it is separable and independent of the gross physical body. By the term *Atman*, we mean that centre of the self-conscious activity which thinks, reacts on the personal or external phenomena, and consciously performs the functions of life. How this soul comes into existence and where does it go after the dissolution of the body are questions which rise in almost every human mind. They are as old as the appearance of the first man upon this earth

From ancient times, the philosophers and the seers of truth of all countries and all nations have made various attempts to unravel the mysteries of the birth, life and death of the individuals upon this planet. Again and again it has been asked: Why do the animals and the human beings suddenly appear into existence, live for some time, fulfil certain desires, perform marvellous deeds, display some wonderful power, and unexpectedly pass away being forced, as it were, to leave their plans and projects of their lives, half-finished and half-fulfilled? Why is it that some come into existence to die within a few days or weeks or years without obtaining an opportunity of knowing or gaining any experience in this vast world of phenomena? Are these events accidental, or is there a law that governs all these aimless events and phenomena that are happening everyday before our eyes? Are these individual souls coming and going away without any purpose, or is there an aim behind all these appearances?

The human minds cannot rest contented until these questions of vital importance are solved. The materialistic thinkers of the Western countries have thrown overboard all such questions by denying the plan and purpose of the individual life as well as existence of the soul. They explain this phenomenon by saying that intelligence is caused by the non-intelligent forces of nature, governed by the mechanical laws and some have the gross forms and some have the finer ones, and the appear-

ance of men and animals are caused by some anatomical combination of atoms and molecules in the process of cosmic evolution. According to them, there is no soul and no life after death, consequently, it is useless to ask such questions; it is a waste of time and energy to bother our heads regarding the existence of the soul or its birth and rebirth. But the materialistic explanation do not satisfy the minds of the seekers after truth, nor do they succeed in stopping all these questions which spontaneously rise in the human minds; on the contrary, it can be shown that the combination of atoms and molecules can never produce consciousness and intelligence, and it is the important factor and only property of the living soul.

It has been said that motion produces nothing but motion. It is impossible for the organic functions to produce the knower or the translator of those functions into sensations, ideas, and thoughts. In the organs, the function of motion will never be that which is not motion like consciousness or intelligence. No consciousness or intelligence is an act of motion. If, however, we study the phenomena of nature with the help of modern science, we understand that the phenomenon of accident or chance has no room in the chain of phenomena, but is guided by the universal law of cause and effect, which is known as the law of causation.

Every event that has occurred in the past or will happen in future, must have some definite cause behind it, and by denying this law, we not only deny the truth of nature, but we deny also the fundamental principle of modern science, which is 'something cannot come out of nothing'. Applying this truth to the facts of birth and life of the individuals, whether animal or human, we understand that they are subject to the law of cause, and they are governed by the law of cause and effect; the cause of life on this earth of all individuals is different in each; they are not accidental appearances, and they cannot be accidental. We inquire into the cause that produced the work; we inquire into the conscious activity of the individual: Does it exist outside of the effect, as some people believe that the cause of the human being is some supernatural being, dwelling outside of the universe? Does this cause exist outside of the effect, or does it form a part and parcel of the effect itself? This is most puzzling, and many of the advanced thinkers have

failed in their efforts to understand the proper relation that exists between a cause and its effect. Upon the proper knowledge of the relation of a cause to its effect, depends the solution of the problem.

All the scientific thinkers of the world come to the conclusion that the true cause of a thing does not lie outside of a thing, but lies in the thing itself, just as the cause of a tree does not lie outside of the tree, but in the tree itself. Cause means the unmanifested state of the effect, and effect means the manifested state of the cause. The whole tree lies in a dormant state in the seed. Nothing comes from outside of the seed, but it was in the seed, and the external conditions and environments only bring out that which existed potentially, or help in the manifestation of the latent power. The seed of an oak tree can never produce anything other than an oak tree, however powerful the environmental conditions may be. The environmental conditions cannot add to the seed one iota to that which did not exist in the seed from the very beginning. Therefore, that which we find in the effect, must have existed in the causal state from the very beginning. All the peculiarities, as manifested in the effect and the tendencies that are to be found in the effect, are nothing but the expressions of the same peculiarities, the same tendencies and the same properties that existed in the germ of life from the very beginning.

Applying this truth to the phenomena of birth and life of the individuals on this earth, we can understand the process and every step of the evolution of the germ of life. Modern science tells us that a germ of life, by going through the process of evolution, can appear as a human being. If this be true, then everything that exists in human being, must have existed in a germ of life from the very beginning in a potential state. We shall have to admit that mind and all its functions, such as desires and tendencies, must have existed in that germ of life and must have remained latent until the time had come when these latent powers found favourable conditions for their expression. They have not come into existence out of nothing, because the law is what exists, must have existed from the very beginning; otherwise we would run the risk of committing the error of admitting the fallacious argument that something could have come out of nothing, and that something has come.

into existence from that state which had no trace of it whatsoever.

These germs of life are nothing but minute invisible centres of forces clothed with minute particles of etherial matter, and having no form, they can appear in any form, either human, or animal, in order to manifest and express certain powers, lying dormant in those germs of life. Although these germs of life are subject to evolution, growth, and progress, yet they are not destructible like the gross physical forms of the universe. These germs possess vital force as well as mental powers and intelligence. If you study the forms of the psychic powers of the microcosmic animal-tribes or micro-organisms, you will understand that the minute germs of life express power and intelligence, and even these germs of life manifest these powers through the gross forms, by manufacturing them, but that manufacture depends upon the law which governs the gross material universe and at the time of the dissolution of the gross forms, all these manifested powers conserve and remain latent in a minute subtle germ of life by the law of persistence of force, until the time comes when the conditions become favourable for the re-manifestation of those powers that have become dormant.

These germs of life are called by various names. We may call them the vehicles of consciousness. Some call them the individual souls or egos. The Indian philosophers describe them as subtle bodies (*sukshma-sharira*) of the individuals. These subtle bodies, being governed by the law of cause and effect and subject to the law of action and reaction, appear again either on this plane or on some other to express some powers, to manifest the latent tendencies, and to gain knowledge and experience by coming in contact with these objects of sense which exist on the material plane. The reappearance of the germs of life in gross physical forms, whether animal or human, is called the 'manifestation' which is known and understood by theory of rebirth of the soul, or doctrine of reincarnation, as it is called in the Vedanta philosophy. By rebirth of the soul, Vedanta does not mean the same thing as transmigration or metempsychosis. In Western countries, there are many thinkers and writers who do not understand the difference that exists between theory of transmigration and

that of reincarnation or rebirth, and, consequently, they write and create great confusion in the minds of the readers.

But transmigration or metempsychosis¹ has a meaning entirely different from that of reincarnation which means the passing of the soul from one body after death into another, or, in other words, the soul after dwelling in one body for a certain length of time leaves it at the time of death and enters into another body which is ready to receive it to gain experience and knowledge in those lives, or through those forms, or to reap the results of the works or deeds of the previous lives. It may enter into a human or an animal form. The doers that have performed the good deeds, will enter into the human forms or the angelic forms, but the doers that have performed the wicked deeds, will appear in animal forms, and remaining as animals for some time, will perhaps take the human forms, and then the angelic forms, and then go on and return again to this earth in the form of the higher animals. Thus transmigration means the revolution of the soul from body to body and excludes the idea of growth, progress, and evolution from lower to higher states of consciousness.

The migrating substance, being of constant quantity and quality, chooses the forms and bodies according to the bent of its character or desires. It is governed by the law of causation, or by the law of action and reaction. In ancient Egypt, they believed that after the death of the body, the souls travelled for thousands of years from one body to another. Pythagoras, Plato and their followers believed in the theory of transmigration or metempsychosis of the soul.² Pythagoras says:

'After death, the rational mind, having been freed from the chains of the body, assumes an etherial vehicle, and passes into the region of the dead, where it remains, till it is sent back to this world, to inhabit some other body, human or animal. After undergoing successive purgations, when it is sufficiently purified, it is received among the goods, and returns to the eternal source from which it first proceeded'

¹ Vide Notes. Cf. also Abhedananda. *Reincarnation*

² Vide Notes.

Plato also believes in this theory of transmigration. He describes in an allegorical way how and where the souls go through the progress of transmigration. He describes in the *Phaedrus*:

'In the heaven, Zeus, the Father and Lord of all creatures, drives his winged car, ordering all things and superintending them. * * Thus when the soul is unable to follow and fails to behold the vision of Truth, she sinks beneath the double load of forgetfulness and vice, her feathers fall from her, and she drops to earth and is born again as human beings or as animals'.

Plato says that ten thousand years must elapse before the soul can return to the place from which she came, because she cannot grow her wings in less time. After the first thousand years, the good and evil souls come together to choose their lives and instead of reaping the natural consequences of their previous deeds and misdeeds, they are allowed to choose the bodies according to the experience and bent of their character. Some being disgusted with mankind, choose the animal bodies. They like to take the lives of eagles and other beings, while others desire again to take the bodies of the human beings to see what experience they can get.³

Through this mythological theory, you can understand what idea is conveyed by the theory of transmigration or metempsychosis. In India, from ancient times the theory of transmigration prevailed, but it was different from that of Plato. The Hindus never believed that the souls were allowed to choose their lower grades of life according to the bent of character, but they were bound to reap the natural consequences of their deed and misdeeds and enjoy or suffer by coming in the bodies, either animal or human. But even today there are many who believe in the transmigration of the souls, that the souls after death can go back to the animals and live as the animals for some time, and then go up to heaven and live there for some time. But the rational minds in India do not believe in the retrogression of the human souls into animal forms, but they believe in the doctrine of the rebirth of the souls or reincarnation.

³ Vide Swami Abhedananda: *Reincarnation*, pp 89-90.

The doctrine of reincarnation is based upon the theory of evolution and depends upon the law of cause and sequence, or that of action and reaction. These germs of life come into existence to fulfil certain powers and desires and to gain certain experience. They do not go back to the animal forms, but they live on the human plane and continue to exist on the human plane, being subject to the law of evolution. It admits the growth and progress through experience and knowledge of the phenomenal world. It is true, however, that there are passages in the writings of the *Upanishads*, which apparently refer to the retrogression of the human souls into the animal nature, but they do not necessarily mean that these souls will have to take animal forms.⁴ How absurd it is to think that the human souls, after manifesting human powers, will choose a dog-body to manifest those powers? How can a lower animal contain that which is greater? But there may be some people who may live like the animals even, when they have the human bodies as we may find among many people like cats and dogs and snakes in the human form and they are often more vicious than natural cats, dogs or snakes. That kind of retrogression to the animal nature is the result of the wicked deeds and the wicked thoughts on the animal plane. These deeds and thoughts must produce their results in the manifestation of the animal nature. But this retrogression is only temporary. It helps the individual souls in gaining the experience on the animal plane only for a time, until they come out of those states, after which they will manifest the higher powers latent in those germs of life. The wicked thoughts and deeds are only our own mistakes, which we have committed on account of our ignorance. No one is born so to commit no mistakes whatever. So every mistake is a great teacher in the long run. We must understand this. But as it is impossible for a human soul to gain all experiences in one short period of one hundred years or more or less, we must have to admit the doctrine of evolution and, consequently, the theory of rebirth or reincarnation of the souls, or of the germs of life, in order to fulfil the purpose of life and gain experiences in all the different phases of evolution.

⁴ Vide Notes

Reincarnation of the soul does not mean the same thing, as experienced by the Buddhist philosophers who deny the permanence of the soul entity, or the permanent entity of the soul. They say that an individual soul, after the death of the body, appears again in some other form, but that being is not the same being, but a being of a similar nature. That creates a difficulty. If we perform certain acts in order to reap the results of those acts, we need the same individual entity; we must admit that there is the continuation of the same being, otherwise, it would be just like a person eating food and another getting satisfaction. Then there would be no law and no harmony in this universe. Those who do not believe in the doctrine of reincarnation, believe either in the one-birth theory, or in the theory of heredity. But these two theories do not satisfy all the questions of the human minds and they do not explain the difference. Those who believe in the one-birth theory, cannot explain why the individual souls come into existence, live for a certain time, and go away. But where do they go they do not know. They do not understand the purpose of life, which is to gain knowledge and experience, and they cannot understand why little children live and die within a few days or weeks or months without any opportunity of knowing anything what purpose of life has been served by that. The Christian theologians, believing in the dogma of one-birth, explain that these little children who die after birth, will go to heaven and be saved by the eternal Father and enjoy the celestial bliss throughout eternity. If the Christians only believe in this dogma, they ought to pray for death of their children at the time of birth and ought to be thankful to the merciful Father when their little babies die and go to the graves over dead bodies. But that theory does not explain the difficulties, rather it takes for granted certain dogmatic solutions which do not explain any of the difficulties. They are neither rational, nor scientific.

Three great religions of the world, Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism still uphold that theory of life and death. They believe that we have come into existence, remain for a short time, and pass away either going to heaven or to the place of the eternal punishment. Those who believe in such theory, cannot make their minds free from the impressions that

they have received during their childhood. The followers of these three great religions believe that the souls come into existence, being created for the first time out of nothing, and continue to do certain works, being forced by the Creator, but they will have to enjoy or suffer all throughout eternity for the works performed during the short existence and which they were forced to do, not by their own free will, but by the will of the Creator who put that kind of free will, vicious or virtuous, into beings. It is as absurd as that one person who is forced to do all the acts of another person and is forced to receive the punishment or reward for the acts that are not done by himself. The only way out of this difficulty is to admit the permanence of the germ of life. If these souls exist today and will continue to exist throughout eternity, they must have existed from eternity, and there must be the re-appearance of that which existed in some form or other.

There is another consideration and that is this that the beginning, the ending and the continuing are the conception of the human minds that depend upon our conception of time, but we all know that time has no absolute existence.⁵ It is only a form of knowledge of our nature, as related to the experience of nature outside.⁶ This conception vanishes at the time of death, just as it does every night when we are in sound sleep. Can you remember, or do you have the idea of time, when your mind is absolutely resting in sound sleep? No, you cannot, because that conception vanishes for the time being, and the souls wake up after the sleep of death, just in the same way as insects wake up in the spring after sleeping through the long winter, or as a chrysalis in the bed of a cocoon, spun by itself in the month of autumn. Nature teaches us this truth of rebirth by this resemblance between sleep and death and by the rejuvenation of a chrysalis in the spring. The souls wake up after the sleep of death and put on the new bodies in order to fulfil certain purposes and gain certain experiences

⁵ In the Advaitic conception, time is regarded as an appearance and as an effect (*karya*) of *avidya* or *maya*. It has merely an empirical reality, but is obliterated or negated in the ultimate Reality.

⁶ Immanuel Kant says in his *Critique of Pure Reason* "Time is nothing but the form of our internal intuition. Take away the peculiar condition of our sensibility, and the idea of time vanishes, because it is not inherent in the objects, but in the subject only that perceives them."—*Max Muller's Translation.*

to reap the results of their previous action, being subject to the law of cause and effect, just in the same way as we throw away our old clothes and put on new ones. Therefore it is said in Vedanta:

‘As we throw away our old garments and put on new ones, so the individual ego or germ of life, after throwing away the old body, manufactures new form for the purpose of fulfilling the aim of life.’⁷

Through this doctrine of reincarnation, the vast majority of people in India, China, and Japan have found consolation in their lives and solved the extremely difficult problems that disturb the minds of the scientists and other thinkers of the world. Even in the Western countries, the philosophers like Plato, Plotinus, Proclus, Kant, Schelling, Fichte, Schopenhauer, Lessing Bruno, Goethe and others; the poets like Wordsworth, Tennyson and others, the theologians like Dr. Julius, Mueller, Dr. Dorner, Ruckert, and others have believed in the doctrine of transmigration, or rebirth of the soul. The ancient philosophers like Origen believed in the doctrine of reincarnation, because this is the only doctrine that satisfies the human minds and answers all the questions on this subject scientifically and explains facts.

If the one-birth theory and heredity do not explain all the difficulties, we ought to try another theory which is better and more satisfactory. At one time the idea of reincarnation and rebirth of the soul spread so wonderfully amongst the Christians of ancient times that Justinian was obliged to pass a law in the Council of Constantinople in 538 A.D. to stop spread of this doctrine which would kill the Christian dogma. The law was this:

‘Whoever shall support the mythical presentation of the pre-existence of the soul, and, consequently, the wonderful opinion of its return, let him be Anathema’.

Those who do not believe in the doctrine of reincarnation, try to explain these difficulties through the theory of heredity. But does this theory explain all the questions?

Suppose there is a young man twentyfive years old and he has inherited certain peculiarities and characteristics like talent for music, or possessing a crooked nose, or a peculiar giggle

⁷ *Bhagavad Gita*, Ch. II, 22. This *sloka* has already been quoted before.

in his laugh, in which he resembles his grandfather. Now this young man, according to the supporters of this theory, has inherited all these things from his grandfather who died six years before his birth. All these peculiarities were handed down to this young man before he was born and came into a human body and when he was like a protoplasmic cell or a jelly-like substance which has neither nose nor mouth. Even at that time he inherited that queer giggle and crooked nose through his grandfather. This protoplasmic cell was smaller than a pin's head, and if you look at it through a microscope you cannot distinguish it from that of a dog, or a cat, or a bird, or a tree. Even then it had all these peculiarities. Before the brain and nerve centres began to take forms, the musical talents and tendencies, possessed by this young man, existed in the protoplasmic cell which came down from his grandfather. Does it not seem to you absurd to think that one protoplasmic cell can contain all these tendencies, the crooked nose and giggle and talents, when there was neither brain, nor mouth, nor nose? There are many scientists who believe in the theory of heredity, but they cannot explain how one single cell can contain all the mental and physical traits and characteristics and peculiarities of father and grandfather, mother and grandmother. You have millions of cells in this human body. But what kind of cell is that which can reproduce all these powers and tendencies which are possessed by each one of us at present? This is the most difficult of all problems the scientific minds have encountered.

There have been many theories against this theory of heredity. We must not forget that an organism can inherit only where there is predisposition to inherit, otherwise it cannot.⁸ Supposing this theory of heredity a truth, but what have we learned from it? We learned that the whole of the young man existed before his birth in the protoplasmic cell and the whole character was there. Does it not seem the same thing as the pre-existence of the human being? Really it seems, as the whole human nature must have existed in that germ of life in some form or other. All the powers, intelligence, and desires

⁸ This has been elaborately discussed elsewhere in connection with the discussion of Weismann's theory of the 'continuity of the germ-plasm.'—Cf. Swami Abhedananda's *Reincarnation*, p. 35.

must have also existed there, otherwise we will have to admit that these powers have come out of nothing which would be absurd and unscientific.

Again the theory of heredity cannot explain all the causes which produce geniuses and prodigies. On the contrary, the doctrine of rebirth of the soul or reincarnation explains all these things satisfactorily. Why was it that the shepherd Mangiamelo could calculate like automatism when he was five years of age? The child Zerab Cloburn, when he was under eight years old, could answer the most difficult of mathematical problems without any figures. Mozart, the great musician could repeat a sonata when he was of four years age and when he was eight years of age he wrote an opera. Hoffman could play music beautifully, before he was ten years of age. Blind Tom did not inherit his powers from his parents. He was a slave and born of slave parents on a plantation. One day he went to his master's parlour when the family was at dinner and he sat at the piano and began to play music which he had never heard. But in music he was a master. He could compose music by himself and play his own compositions for three quarters of an hour, and after once hearing music, he could repeat it note by note. He never had a lesson and could not have understood lessons. These illustrations disprove the theory of family heredity or the theory of 'cumulative heredity'.^{*} Those, who believe in the theory of heredity, say that genius is the result of cumulative heredity which presents itself by gradual degree, i.e., from less germs to greater and still greater and so on. But in the whole history of the genealogy of geniuses, all the greater examples like Shakespeare or Lincoln or Jesus or Buddha or Sankaracharya, we do not find any trace of genius in the family of these great men, on the contrary, their parents and grand-parents did not show such powers.

There had been many shepherds in Galilee at that time, but Jesus the Christ was the only one who could not inherit anything from the shepherd nature of his parents and relatives. There had been many young princes and kings in India, but there was only one Buddha. Why was it? Does the theory of heredity explain all these instances? No. If we do

^{*} Vide Swami Abhedananda. *Reincarnation*, pp. 46-47

exist now, we cannot think of our annihilation or destruction. Destruction, in the sense of annihilation is impossible in this world of reality. If we exist today, we cannot think of our non-existence either before or after. Where did the soul exist before the birth of this body, no one can tell. We cannot find the beginning of the soul or its end.

There are some objections that have been raised by many who do not believe in the doctrine of reincarnation. One question had been asked very often: 'If we did exist before, why do we not remember it?' If we examine our own lives, we do not remember many things, but still we know we did them. Do you remember what you did on the eighth of February, twenty-five years ago in the afternoon? Perhaps you will say you do not know, because you cannot remember. Our memory is only that power of the mind by which we can recall the latent impressions and ideas, stored up in the mind. Memory grows, and if we develop our memory, we will remember many things which we do not know at present. In India, there are many Yogis who can remember their past experiences. In ancient Greece, it is known that ancient philosophers came to India to find out the secret of their wonderful knowledge which the Hindus possessed. Some people say that if they could remember the past, how happy they would be; but perhaps if they did, they would make a bad use of their present.

If you knew that you were going to have some great misfortunes within a few days or months, would you be equal to performing the duties on hand at present? Rather you would constantly remember those misfortunes. We should not try to satisfy the idle curiosity, by trying to know what we were in the past, but let us make our present useful, and do such acts that will help us in becoming better than what we are today. Make the best use of our present until the time comes, when the higher illumination will reveal to us all the past and future like a panorama before our spiritual eyes, then we shall be able to say as Sri Krishna said to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

'Both you and I have passed through many births, you know them not, while I know them all.'¹⁰

¹⁰ बहुनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चार्जुन ।

तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि न त्वं वेत्थ परन्तप ।—भगवद् गीता ४।५

CHAPTER VI

THE SOUL AND ITS DESTINY

The question of the soul and its destiny spontaneously arises in all minds whether cultured or uncultured. No other question touches the hearts of men and women so deeply. No other problem arouses their interest so much, or sets their minds to thinking, as this universal problem, concerning the nature of the human soul and its destiny. From ancient times, the philosophers, the sages, the thinkers and the prophets have tried their best to solve this great problem to answer this momentous question. In their attempts, they arrived at various conclusions from time to time. Some of their conclusions appealed to some minds. Some say that there is no such thing as the soul which can exist independent of the body and which is separate from the body, while others deny its existence entirely. Those who believe in the existence of the soul as an independent thing from the body, say that it will continue to exist after death, i.e., it is immortal. But this question does not disturb the minds of those who deny the existence of the soul, or believe that the soul is not independent of the body, but it depends on the body as long as the body lives, or the soul lives in the body. There may be some persons among us who may be positively sure that they have no soul. But all the religions aim to lead the human mind to the belief that the soul is eternal, that it continues to exist after death, and that it enjoys the pleasure and happiness of heaven, or suffers from punishment. But such ideas are based upon the scriptural texts, or upon the writings or sayings of some great sages or seers.

The popular belief among the Christians is that immortality of the soul, or the immortal life, was brought into light by Jesus the Christ and that before the advent of Jesus this idea was unknown to the world and no one can attain the eternal life except through Jesus. But when we study the ancient pre-Christian religions and their scriptures, we find that this idea of eternal life was almost universally known and was accepted among the ancient Egyptians, Chaldeans, Hindus, Zoroastrians,

Romans, Greeks, and Scandinavians. In fact, the study of the ancient religions of the world disproves the Christian dogma that Jesus the Christ alone has brought eternal light into life and that no one can attain heaven except through him. He might have enlightened the minds of certain Jewish tribes who did not believe in the scriptures, or who were in ignorance of them. But, as regards bringing this eternal light into life for the first time, we cannot accept.

Although the vast majority of the followers of different religions believe in an eternal soul which is immortal and continues to exist after death, still there is a large number of advanced thinkers who question the authority of these scriptural statements. After making independent researches, they have come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a soul, or that the soul is one with the body, or the result of forces, or the material particles of the body. They have sufficient strong arguments to support their conclusions. In the same manner, the scientists have strong arguments to prove their theories. They have left no stone unturned to discover a satisfactory answer or results to this great problem. The fine instruments of all kinds have been invented to capture the secret, or to discover that which passes out of the brain at death. The dissected brains of the animals have been most carefully examined and minutely watched to discover what is it that passes out at the time of death from the human body. But, alas! all such attempts, or all these human efforts have failed. All these human efforts to capture that invisible something, or the existence of the visible magnetism of animals in the human form, have failed and this has driven many seekers after the soul to the conclusions of the agnostics, the atheists, and the materialists. This inability to capture the soul has made many people deny the existence of the soul altogether, or its continuance after death, cannot believe in anything that is beyond the sense of perception. No arguments can convince them. They try to extract intelligence from the matter. They say that intelligence, consciousness, and mind are produced by the material body. They believe that consciousness and mind have no independent existence of their own and they last so long as the body lasts and after the dissolution of the body nothing is left, because they cannot see with their sense power the intelli-

gent soul which passes out of the body. But, at the same time, no one can prove that matter and insentient forces of nature have ever produced consciousness or intelligence.

If we deny the existence of the soul as independent of the body or as something which rules over the body and regulates and directs the organic functions of the body, then we are immediately confronted with the ethical, psychological and philosophical difficulties. The denial of existence of the soul as independent of the body, will destroy the ethical fitness of things as if we were nothing but machines.

If we say that our life passes out like the snuff of a candle, then why should we struggle for an existence and why worry through troubles, miseries, and sufferings? What would be the use of living a virtuous life if we do not continue to exist after this gross body is dead and gone? Why should we not kill our neighbours and get everything out of them that we can in order to enrich ourselves? Posterity will take care of itself. Every individual will be extremely selfish and there will be no standard of morality. If we deny the existence of the soul which lasts after the body is dead and gone, then what is the use of building up our character and what good will it do, if all individuals are going to pass away into eternal oblivion? All the troubles in acquiring an education will be in vain. The love for wife and children, grown up through general self-sacrifice, will be cheated out of its full development. Are we then only playing a long and desperate game with worthless counters if our desires are going to be all for nothing? Is it possible? No, because if this be true, then each and every one of us ought to commit suicide and get rid of all these sufferings and miseries. We ought to throw all the scriptures into the ocean and demolish all temples and churches and live like beasts on the sense plane. If our souls are not immortal, or if we deny the existence of the soul, there would be no reason to live a virtuous life or for training our children up righteously.

This ethical difficulty will never be removed by those who do not admit the existence of the soul as independent of the body. Then again, in psychology, we will have to face the same difficulty if we deny the existence of the soul. The old materialistic theory that the soul or mind is the result of the functions of the brain, is dead and gone. It is not for sensible people

any more. At the same time if we deny the existence of the soul, we shall not be able to explain this self-consciousness and ever-working functions of the brain which can be translated into the sensible ideas and thoughts and we shall not be able to explain, by what force are they developed into a harmonious whole, by what force are they brought into the form of memory, and what force acts on the brain cells to produce the conscious identity of the individual ego. We have the sense of sight, the sense of hearing and the sense of touch, etc. Can the vibrations of ether produce any one of these senses? Can any mesmeric force produce the sense of seeing or hearing? It is simply impossible. No one has ever seen it. These and many other psychological difficulties will have to be removed.

The self-consciousness has never been produced by the combination of ether or matter, or by electricity. Again when we analyse this whole material psychologically, what do we gather? The psychological researches lead us to first principles, matter, knowledge, and consciousness. The whole universe can be resolved into these great principles: first, matter, then knowledge or force, and third, consciousness. Of these the matter is immutable or immortal, and psychological researches have also proved that matter has neither been created by anybody, nor are the forces. Matter is indestructible and non-creatable, and they are conserved and continue to exist. If this conservation of matter and forces be true, then we naturally ask why the third principle, through which alone the recognition of all are known, is not also conserved? If matter and knowledge are conserved and if they are uncreated and indestructible, then how do you know it? You know it by your consciousness and your intelligence. Can you know it by any other force? The recognition of matter and force depends upon your own consciousness, and if those two be conserved, then how is it that your own consciousness will not be conserved? If matter and knowledge be uncreated and indestructible, then how can we prove that your consciousness is creatable and destructible? Where did you get that knowledge from? How did you know this if you had no consciousness and no intelligence?

Here we must not forget that matter and knowledge form only one half of the universe, and the other half is the subjective world. If we were all unconscious at this minute, the exis-

tence of this room would be nothing to us. We know of it through our consciousness.

The existence of matter and the existence of knowledge must depend upon the consciousness of the individual. If one of them must be conserved, the other must be conserved also. If we analyse the phenomena of the universe and get to the principles that have manufactured these phenomena of the universe, we come to the conclusion that both matter and knowledge are conserved, and if they are conserved, your intelligence and consciousness are also conserved. In order to remove these difficulties, we are bound to admit the existence of the soul, independent of the body, which is the source of consciousness and intelligence in us, by which we know our own existence and the existence of other things of the universe. The soul cannot be produced by matter, as matter produces nothing but matter¹. Newton discovered gravitation, but gravitation never discovered Newton. If you believe in the permanency of your own existence, you yourself are, of course, one with the body, then you think of yourself as the body.

But it is very obvious that the body is constantly changing. Then where is that permanency in our bodies? This material form or the gross physical organism will be destroyed. Then where will lie our permanency? Not in the body, but in the soul. It is the sense of 'I', which will continue to exist after this body is gone.

Having understood this solution of the problem, concerning the existence of the soul, we question: if the soul continues to exist, what will become of it afterwards, and what will be its destiny? Modern science does not help us in answering the question of the destiny of the soul. It is too deep. We can only guess from the premises upon which the induction can be formed. We get the answer from the Vedanta, which is most universal and most unsectarian. It tells us that the soul, which produces the gross material form, is separable from the body and can exist independent of the body. It possesses the sense-powers, life-force, mind and intellect as well as the impressions of its physical and mental activities, and this soul manufactures the body through the mediums of parents.

¹ Vide Swami Abhedananda · *Self-knowledge*, pp. 17-18

Now a question may arise: if the soul continues to exist after death, does it lose its individuality? We get the answer from the Vedanta that it retains its own individuality. It can remember where it was, who were its parents, etc.

Modern spiritualism and the result of the psychological researches have given us ample proof of the individual soul after death. Those, who are highly advanced in spiritual life, do not care for their connections with earthly regions, but they rise higher above them. Souls retain their individuality, and can go to any realms. They can go to the angels, and to heaven. According to Vedanta, there are many heavens, and not only one. By heaven we understand the realm of an existence, where we go to enjoy the pleasures of life. Those, who aspire after the higher spiritual life, will seek higher things. They will go onward and upward, until they are one with the infinite Being.

The Christian and Mohammedan ideas of heaven and hell are the same. Their heavens are the place of eternal happiness and glory for the just, and hell a place of eternal punishment for the wicked.² But, in the Vedanta, you will find that it is not so.

Those souls, which have desires for earthly things will have to come down to earth. Some souls will remain earthly bound for a certain length of time, say one hundred, or a thousand years. The conditions will vary, and those souls, which will have earthly desires to be a king or emperor, or to have a large fortune, a large family or any other kind of ambition, will have to come down on this plane. They will be born again. So the destiny of the human soul is determined by the thoughts and desires and tendencies. We create our own destiny by our thoughts and desires and deeds. What we are today, are the results of our past existence. God is not responsible for our conditions. We ourselves are responsible, and if we understand this secret mystery of the soul, then we can mould our future in such a manner that we will never go down, but rise higher and higher, until we have reached the goal of our existence.

Those who perform good deeds and lead a virtuous life, will come down on the human plane and be born again, until

² Vide Swami Abhedananda. *Path of Realization*, pp. 173-198.

they rise higher in their aspirations and desires, and those that have low tendencies and died in absolute ignorance, will become idiots, subject to suffering and misery for a certain length of time, until the higher perceptions will be opened to them. So we must try our best to perform good deeds to build up our characters and to lead a virtuous life and then we will enjoy eternal happiness and immortality even in this life.

CHAPTER VII

PRE-EXISTENCE AND REINCARNATION

Most mysterious is the government concerning life and death of individuals upon this plane. From the very ancient times, the philosophers and the thinkers of all countries have tried to unravel this great mystery of nature. Again and again it has been asked why do people come into existence upon this plane for a short time. Some are born and pass out within a few weeks, or a few months, or a few years, without having any opportunity to fulfil all the desires they had, as if they are forced by some external power to leave this world unexpectedly before they have completed their desires and experiences. Why is this? Why do some people come and live for a short time, and others live longer? Are these all accidental? Do the souls come here and pass out without any definite purpose and without being governed by any law? Or is there a law behind all these appearances? This question rises in our minds and each individual must solve this problem otherwise he or she cannot remain contented. The mind wants solution, because our tendency is to know. So we must know, and we must solve all the problems of life and death.

When we turn towards different classes of thinkers, we find that there is a class of thinkers who are known as materialists or scientists or agnostics. They deny the existence of the soul as an intelligent self-conscious entity, but they try to explain everything through the material forces which are governed by the mechanical laws. Some of them have gone so far as to assert that appearance and disappearance of the human beings on this planet are nothing but the results of some fortuitous or accidental combination of matter, or of disintegration of material particles which are caused by the natural process of the evolution of matter. There is no such thing as soul, there is no such thing as purpose of life, as all these are coming accidentally. And these appearances of human bodies or beings at the time of death cease to exist. But this explanation does not satisfy the minds of the seekers after truth. The questions

are not solved. In the innermost soul of our souls, we know that it is wrong, it is not true, and matter has not produced intelligence and consciousness. We do not see matter producing intelligence and consciousness. It would be very difficult for any scientist to prove that the combination of matter, or the material particles, which are governed by mechanical laws, can produce intelligence and consciousness. On the other hand, it is a scientific truth that motion produces nothing but motion. But the intelligent soul or consciousness is not a motion; neither is it a result of motion, but it is something distinct from motion. It is the knower of motion and all the activities. Motion produces nothing but motion. It does not produce the knower who has all the power of translating the molecular activities of the brain cells into sensations, perceptions, ideas, desires, and thoughts. All these are the living properties of a living soul which functions in the mind. No one has proved that brain creates the mind or intelligence, but, on the contrary, the great thinkers of the world have understood the secret of truth concerning the relation between the mind and the brain. For instance, Dr. Thompson, in his book *Brain and Personality*, explain that brain is only the instrument, but the personality or the mind, or the intelligent self-conscious entity, is overshadowing the brain. He compared the brain with a violin. Just as the violin cannot produce any music without a musician, so music is not in the violin, but is in the mind of the musician and the musician must bring it out by playing upon the strings which would touch our souls. Violin itself cannot do it. Similarly the personality is like the musician who is playing upon the strings of the nerves and the brain cells from outside, as it were, over-shadowing it and producing harmony or discord. If the musician is not well-trained, well-advanced and well-developed, instead of bringing out harmony, he creates discord just as a child would play upon the violin instead of producing any music and would create discord, which would be a very undesirable thing.

In this way, if we analyse, we see that our soul, the self-conscious entity and thinker, is not the result of the activity of the brain-cells, but is something distinct and immaterial. But yet it has the power to control and govern all the material forces that are under its dominion. If we understand that there

is some entity which is our real self and possesses all the desires and thoughts and ideas, then we wish to know what is that something that is self-conscious? Where does it exist? How does it produce this physical body and organism? Well, in the first place, if we study nature, we find that the law of causation is inexorable and omnipotent. The law of cause and effect governs everything in this universe. Every effect must have a cause. If we deny the law of causation, we not only deny the truth of nature, but also destroy the fundamental principle of modern science which is something that cannot come out of nothing. This theory has been well-advanced by the *Sankhya* of Kapila. In fact, non-existence cannot produce existence, or existence cannot come out of non-existence. If we exist today, we must have had a cause. That cause is something, and non-existence. In other words, we have not come out of nothing. Applying this truth to the phenomena of life and death, we understand that all the appearances of the human beings and the animals on this plane have definite causes. Having understood thus so far, we want to trace the kind of cause that produces all these human activities or the activities of an intelligent being. What is the cause that produces all these things? Is that cause outside of ourselves, or is it in us? This is another clear understanding of the relation of the cause to the effect which is absolutely necessary for the proper solution of any problem that we have to face.

Instead of going into the details of the methods by which the ultimate scientific truth has been established, let us take it for granted that this scientific truth that the cause of a thing is not outside of the thing itself, but is in the thing, is scientific and correct. But it is a fact that the cause of a tree is not outside of the tree, but is in the tree itself; the cause of a human being is not outside of the human being, but is in the human being. So we do not have to trace the cause outside of us. In other words, the cause is the unmanifested state of the effect and the effect is the manifested state of the cause. The whole tree remains in the seed in an invisible state or in a potential form. The environments only give the favourable conditions, under which what is latent in the seed, becomes actual and real and manifested. The environments do not give any of the powers to the seed which were not already there. The

environments simply give the proper conditions. If we understand this clearly, then we find that the environments do not create, but the creative power is in the seed itself, and that seed does not manifest the causal state, until it has taken the form of the tree. Now apply this truth to the human being, or to its manifestation. If the cause is in us, then what is that cause? That cause must be something which contains all the peculiarities which a human being can manifest in his lifetime. The cause retains all the potentialities of the forces or powers of the mind, of the thought, of the desire, and of the intelligence just as the seed of an oak tree contains all the peculiarities of an oak tree. Those conditions or powers which are latent in the seed of an oak tree, cannot be changed by the environments, but they will become manifested into an oak tree and not in a chestnut tree. This is a real fact. This has been scientifically proved. Therefore the causal state of a human being will manifest in the future and that causal state is invisible just as we do not see in a seed all the latent tree that is already there. The seed of a banyan tree, for instance, is as small as a mustard seed, and if it is given to you, you would not know what it is, but it contains a gigantic banyan tree which will cover the area of a mile in circumference and will produce, perhaps, seventyfive or a hundred trunks of one tree. There is such a tree in the Botanical Garden near Calcutta. One tree covers an area of a mile and has seventyfive trunks. It shoots the roots which afterwards grow into the trunks of the tree. That gigantic tree which would last for thousands of years like one of the big trees here in Mariposa Grove, is contained in that seed. No other seed will produce that. All the peculiarities of a banyan tree are in that seed. Similarly the invisible germ which you may call an amoeba or bioplasm or protoplasm and which will afterwards appear as a human being, contains all the potentialities of that human being in the invisible state. If we deny this, then we run the risk of committing that blunder that something has come out of nothing. But the scientific truth is that whatever exists in the end, existed also in the beginning. If in the end we find a human being like Abraham Lincoln or Shakespeare or Plato, then the germ, or the seed form which has manufactured that particular manifestation, contained all those powers in an in-

visible state. You may call it a germ, or you may call it by any other name. Names do not make much differences. Leibnitz called it Monad.¹ Scientists call it the germ of life. The Vedanta philosophy calls it the subtle body. The subtle bodies are the invisible germs or nuclei which contain the mind, the intelligence, the reasoning, the power of thinking, the will power, and all the senses i.e., the powers of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, and so forth. All these powers are there in the germ of life. It also contains the impressions of the previous manifestation, and those impressions are embedded in that substance. That substance is etherial or electric i.e., the minute particles of the matter which are held together by that force which is called the life-force, or the vital energy.

Now this subtle being is the real man. It appears in the form of a human body which it manufactures and lives in. Just as an oyster or a crab would manufacture a shell as a dwelling-house, so this germ of life or the subtle body of the individual, whether it is human or animal, takes only the form according to its desires, or according to its tendencies. The human germ of life will manufacture a human body, and, if it desires to be of any particular animal form, it manufactures that form. It has no particular form, but it can take any form. This subtle body contains everything. So we do not gain anything from outside. It is already there. It has infinite potentialities and infinite possibilities.

At the time of death, the individual germ of life contracts all its forces and powers, and all these are centralized into a nucleus and that nucleus retains the life, the mind, the powers of the senses, and all the impressions and experiences that the individual has gathered. Then, in course of time, when the favourable conditions come, it manufactures another form. Parents are nothing but the principal channels through which these germs of life, or the subtle bodies find proper conditions of manufacturing human beings by obeying the laws of nature. Parents do not create the soul. In fact, the parents cannot give birth to a child according to their will. It would be an absolute impossibility. Unless the soul comes to them and

¹ Leibnitz's conscious Monad is somewhat similar to *Anu* of Kanada.

nourishes the germ, it would be an absolute impossibility. These subtle bodies are like the water globules. As a water globule may remain in the form of water in the ocean, so it may go up and become invisible in a vapoury state in a cloud and then come down again in the form of a drop of rain. Then it may remain again in the mud, or it may be forzen into a solid substance when you can handle the form of a solid substance, or you can handle the form of a piece of ice. But it is never destroyed. It may become invisible or visible. These conditions do not change the globule of water. It is there and this globule of water of the subtle body arises in the beginningless past in the ocean of the eternal life, and retains the reflection of the supreme Spirit in the form of intelligence. It may appear on this earth, or it may go to another planet. It has the power to travel with the speed of light. It can follow the way of light from one planet to another with vibrations or waves of the ether. It can shoot out instantaneously. It has such a power. And this subtle body may remain on this plane in the human form. Then after death, it might go to heaven or to some other planet, or remain in an invisible state until the proper conditions and suitable environments are found. Then it gravitates according to their desires. This whole process is governed by the law and this law is called the law of reincarnation or remanifestation of the subtle form in the gross physical form. This law is inexorable. No matter what we want to do, or whether we admit its existence or not, it is working just the same. The same forces which have brought us here this time, will bring us here again. Who can stop it? Your will or my will would not stop it until we understand this law, outgrow it, and go beyond it. So we may think that we deny it or we do not want to believe such stuff. Well, the ignorant fool may say that we do not believe in gravitation and deny its existence, but still his whole being is held up by the force of the gravity. He could not live without it. The molecules of his body would fly assunder if there were no force of gravity to hold it together. He could not live on the surface of the earth if he were not held down by the force of the gravity. Still he can deny it. But his denial amounts to nothing and simply betrays his own ignorance that he does not understand the law. In the same way, anyone who denies rein-

carnation, betrays his own ignorance, because he does not know the law.

Those who do not believe in reincarnation, believe in the one-birth theory. Two great religions, Judaism, with its offshoots Christianity and Mohammedanism, and Zoroastrianism, rather believe in the theory of one birth, and try to explain all the inequalities and diversities, which we find among us. But they do not succeed. They believe that the souls of the individuals have been created out of nothing for the first time, and some of them tell us that they will continue to exist for ever. Now, how is it possible that anything that has a beginning at one end, will continue to exist for ever at the other? It is absurd. It is an absolute impossibility. Anything that has a beginning, must have an end. If you believe that the individual souls that have been created out of nothing for the first time, will continue to live for ever, then you have to admit that these souls were not created out of nothing, but they existed before. In Genesis, you read in the first chapter that God created man after His own image. In the second chapter, you read that He made man out of the dust of the earth, and blew the breath of life into his nostrils. There are the two statements. There were two stories, which were prevalent amongst the Phoenicians of ancient times, and the ancient Jews. The writer of Genesis accepted those two stories and put them together in the chapters. But the two ideas are radically opposed. Which will you accept? But if God created man after His own image, how did He create him? Well the second said that God created him out of the dust of the earth. But it should be remembered that earth is the material insentient matter and so it does not explain how the breath of life came into existence. All these difficulties that arise in our minds after studying these statements cannot be solved in any other way unless we accept the idea that the spirit or intelligence or consciousness was never created, but the body was created or manufactured through the process of evolution. As the breath of life was never created, so the mind and soul were never created, but the soul retains the image of the Lord, or the supreme Spirit. In other words, as Vedanta explains, the breath of life contains the reflection of the supreme Spirit that is all-intelligence. We cannot explain anything by the theory of one-birth, or by that of creation, of

the soul out of nothing because if God creates the soul out of nothing, why does He make so many varieties of characters? Some are born to enjoy and to show their genius and wonderful talents. Others are kept to manifest nothing but ignorance and other weaknesses. How can you explain those things? A person may have five children. One might be a murderer, another might be a genius, another might be an artist, and so on. What makes all these inequalities and diversities? If God creates each one separately at the time of the birth of the body, then who is to be held responsible? Not the parents, but God Himself. Why could not He do better? That question must rise in our minds and we must try to find the solution.

Then another question rises: why do children come into life to live only for a short time, for a day, or for a few weeks? Why do they pass away without gaining any opportunity to earn anything, or gain experience in this vast world of phenomena? Who is responsible and what becomes of those children? Well, there might be a theory that they would go to heaven and enjoy eternal life. Those, who could believe in that story, it is better to pray for death of their children before they commit any more harm, and thank the Lord that their little bodies are covered by the grave. I would do that if I had little children and believed in such a thing. Why should they go through all these miseries and troubles? If we could go to heaven straight by dying in childhood, we would rather die than live. So this theory does not explain anything, but makes it appear to us as absurd and irrational. Then if you admit the theory of predestination and grace, that also does not help us very much. If we are predestined and pre-ordained to do these things, and if a murderer is pre-ordained to murder somebody and before he had any will, it was all arranged by the Creator, then why should we hang the murderer? We should hang the Creator, because He is responsible. Therefore we cannot find any solution.

Then there is another creed of heredity. Does heredity explain all these inequalities and diversities? No, it cannot. How can heredity explain the cases of prodigies and geniuses? Take the case of the young Polish boy who is a great chess player. He is only eight years old. He is now in New York, I think. He began to play chess when he was five years old and

has beaten all the great experts and champions of London and Paris after playing thirty-three games at a time and defeating them all.¹ What mental power does he possess? He has brothers and sisters. They are not uncommon. Neither are the parents in any way uncommon. He is the only one. How can heredity explain that? Take the case of Goethe, the great German poet. He was an octogenarian poet and philosopher. When he was ten, he was a master of Greek and sixteen other languages. There is a Frenchman now² in Columbia who knows more than a dozen languages. He knows more than his teacher can teach him. The theory of heredity cannot explain these cases of prodigies and geniuses. But there is another theory that would explain them. Whatever a person has manifested in this life, he had it at the time of his birth from the very beginning, i.e., he gained the power in his previous life. So any talent or genius is only the expression of all that was developed in the particular soul. I saw a girl who was six years old in New York city. She could play the piano, Bach and Bethoven and all the difficult music with such an ease and such a perfection that you would be surprised. She could hardly span the octave and yet she was playing this rapid music with most wonderful expression. Her mother was with her and she was not a musician. Her father was never a musician. How do you explain that? Heredity cannot explain. But we can explain that theory easily. Because this child was a musician and the soul of this child was a musician in her previous incarnation, and now she has manufactured another form with a little brain. Her brain is not developed enough to understand such music, but the musician is overshadowing the brain and manipulating all these strings of the brain and the nerve-cells and producing all this wonderful music. That is the only rational explanation.

If we deny pre-existence of the soul, we cannot explain immortality. Immortality does not mean that it has a beginning at one end and endless existence on the other. Pre-existence explains the continuity of life in the past, and immortality explains the continuity of life in the future. Immortality means an eternal life. You cannot accept one half and deny the other half, because each would be incomplete. So the complete soul-

¹ & ² As to the lecture delivered in America, sometime between 1901 and 1905.

life means eternal past and eternal future. The soul was never born and was never created out of nothing. It is the grandest theory and it is satisfying. It is comforting that we have not come into existence out of nothing, but we have everything in the beginning. If we are the images of God, then we possess all the powers. God was not a substance that came into existence suddenly like a mushroom, but He is eternal, and naturally our soul-life must be as eternal as God's life. In fact, we are parts and parcels of God. In this way, if we understand how great and grand and beautiful we are, we do not have to accept any such idea that after death we will discontinue to live. But, on the contrary, we can say that so long as we have desires and those desires that are to be fulfilled on the human plane under our present conditions, we will come back to this plane. If our desires change, we will go to other planes. For instance, if I have a desire to become an artist like Michael Angelo and if I in this life cannot become a Michael Angelo and still possess the desire in my soul, do you think that desire will have no fulfilment or manifestation? Nothing will stop the fulfilment of that desire, because that desire will bring me back to the proper environments and other conditions where I will gravitate and then start from my childhood with a tendency to become an artist. Nothing can stop me and I will continue so long as that desire is strong. I will continue until I become a master artist. And that is the law of nature. So whatever desire we possess, if that desire be strong, then that desire will mould our future, create our destiny, and make us accordingly. This idea has been given in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

'Whatsoever desire is very strong during the lifetime, becomes predominant at the time of death, and that desire moulds the creation of the subtle body of the individual and that determines the future of the individual.'³

So that gives us an opportunity to find out what we shall be in future. We will make our future by our thoughts and desires. If you desire to be a great politician, you will be a

³ यं यं चापि स्मरणं भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।

तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभाषितः ॥—भगवद्गीता ८:६

great politician. If you desire to be a great saviour, you will be a great saviour. If you desire to be a great artist, you will be a great artist. In fact, you live in the eternity. Do not despair. If you cannot be a great artist in this life, there are hundreds of lives coming to you, till you get that desire. And when one set of desires is fulfilled, another will spring up. As each individual soul possesses infinite potentialities and possibilities, so it can express an infinite variety of manifestation. Because we are all eternal and are parts of the Infinite.

The idea of pre-existence of soul and reincarnation has settled the questions and solved the problems of life and death amongst the ancient philosophers like Plato, Pythagoras and the Neo-Platonists and also amongst the poets like Wordsworth, Tennyson, Walt Whitman and others. Walt Whitman said:

‘As to you, Life, I reckon your are the leavings of many death. No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before’.

He learned this truth through the study of Vedanta, just as Emerson learned the belief in reincarnation from the study of Vedanta. It is also true that there is no other philosophy which manifests this idea so strongly as Vedanta does. Of course, Plato and Pythagoras got their ideas through Persia and Egypt from India. The Hindus understood the secret of this law of pre-existence and reincarnation even at the dawn of human civilization on the earth. That idea spread among the early Christians until the time of Justinian, who anathematized all those that believed in this idea, in the Council of Constantinople in 638 A.D. He said:

‘Whoever believes in this wonderful doctrine of pre-existence of the soul, let him be anathema’.

The churches from that time have not accepted although it is in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. It does not preserve their scheme of salvation. But outside of the orthodox people, there are millions of people in the world, who find comfort like the Buddhists, Japanese, Hindus, and poets and thinkers of all countries. Therefore it is the rational solution and it explains all the causes of inequalities and diversities and the appearance of the prodigies Heredity or the

theory of one-birth, as explained by the orthodox theologians, does not explain or solve the problem of life. Now you may have noticed that there are persons who cannot accept this theory of pre existence and reincarnation, because they cannot remember. They say, well, if we existed before, why do we not remember what we did ourselves? Do you remember what you did in your childhood? Would you say you did not exist then, because you cannot remember? Certainly not. What you did when you were a child? All the existence you have gone through and the details have passed out of your memory, but the knowledge you have gathered through those experiences, is the part and parcel of your being and that has shaped you as you are. Memory is of short duration, and it is sometimes powerful and sometimes very weak.

But modern spiritualism has thrown a different light on this subject. It says that the souls that have passed out remember their relatives, remember the conditions under which they passed. So the memory continues. Take the case of Raymond, the son of Sir Oliver Lodge. He remembered everything how he died and so on, and he communicated to his father and mother and told them. So that shows that we retain our memory even. But the instruments, the brain and the nervous system are destroyed. Therefore the memory is not the product of the function of the brain, but it is a power of the mind which we retain so long as there would be the mind. However, the memory is not so important. If we do remember our past, we might make bad use of our present. Therefore it is not desirable. Suppose somebody knows or understands his past, and knows that he has committed wicked deeds, and he is going to suffer for it, and he would be constantly thinking of that. He would lose all these opportunities and make a bad use of his present. He would not be able to do any work properly. He would be worrying about how to avoid the misfortune that is coming. He would not be able to sleep even, or eat a good meal. Therefore the Vedanta philosophy tells us not to think of the past but to mould our future and present, so that we can make our future better. Of course, there is a method by which we can remember our past, because all the experiences that we have gained during our lifetime, are stored up in our subliminal or subconscious mind where all these impressions are pigeon-

So anyone, who reaches that state of superconsciousness, develops a sight. By developing that sight one can see the past and the future and remember all the experiences that one has gone through all the experiences that one will go through. And when he understands that life is eternal, he does not worry about the conditions of the failures and successes or diseases or sufferings of this earthly plane. This life on this plane is only for a short time, but from the standpoint of eternal life we are never born and we are never going to die, because we are birthless, deathless, eternal, immortal, and also part and parcel of the infinite Spirit which is worshipped under different names among different races.

CHAPTER VIII

PRE-EXISTENCE AND IMMORTALITY

One of the fundamental principles of philosophy and religion of Vedanta is immortality of the human soul. According to the teachings of Vedanta, each individual soul is immortal by nature. However sinful it may appear to be from the moral standpoint, it will continue to exist after death of the body. It cannot be annihilated or destroyed into nothingness. It can never cease to exist.

On this point the religion of Vedanta differs from the dogmas of those dualistic religions, which maintain that immortal life can be obtained only by a few chosen ones as a special gift of God, while others will perish. Many of the orthodox Christian theologians hold that the continued life after death in the eternal future is not a natural gift, but a special one, being conditioned upon the proper use of this life. They think that immortality is a reward of merit, or of good works, or of an ethical life, or of faith in the Christ. Here we may ask, who will decide how many degrees above zero one must be moral in order to obtain the gift of immortality?

If we examine minutely we shall find that this dogma of conditional immortality is not based upon a rational foundation. It makes God, the merciful Father, partial and unjust. How can we imagine that a just, impartial and merciful Father will grant immortality to some of His children and allow the rest to perish simply on account of their immoral acts or mistakes? The religion of Vedanta does not teach this dogma of conditional immortality, but, on the contrary, it says that immortal life cannot be a reward or a gift of any superior being, because that reward or punishment is nothing but the result or reaction of our own actions, and since every human action is finite or limited by time and space, and consequently non-eternal, it cannot produce an eternal effect in the form of immortal life. No human action, either of the mind or of the body, however good or virtuous it may be called, can produce an eternal effect which is unlimited by time or space. It

will then be against the law of cause and sequence which makes every effect or result similar to its cause, both in nature and in quality.

There is another important point on which the conception of immortality in Vedanta differs from that of Christianity. Christianity, believing in the theory of special creation of the individual soul at the time of birth, denies pre-existence of the human soul previous to the birth of the body, yet it admits the continuity of the soul after death in an eternal future. This doctrine again is not based upon a rational foundation, nor is it supported by any fact of nature, because it is impossible for a thing which has a beginning in time to last for ever. No one has ever seen or heard of any substance which began to exist at a certain time, but continued for ever in future. Can we imagine a stick, the one end of which is in our hand and the other end is endless and unlimited? No, it is impossible. We cannot think of a thing which has a beginning or a limit, either in time or in space on one side and, on the other side, is unlimited by either time or space. As we cannot imagine any earthly object or material thing of such a nature, how can we imagine that the soul which had its birth in time and space, will continue to exist for ever? We cannot conceive of a soul which came into existence at the time of birth, will remain for ever after death in eternal future, or in endless time. Therefore immortality which means the eternal continuity of existence, pre-supposes the existence of the soul, previous to the birth of the body. If we believe in immortality of the human soul, we shall have to admit its pre-existence also, because that which is born, must die, and everything that has a beginning, must have an end. This is the law of nature; we cannot go against it.

The laws of nature are always uniform and universal. There is no such thing as an exception. All exceptions are governed by other laws which we may or may not know. They are only the expressions of different laws. Anything that is born must be subject to death, and that which has a beginning must have an end. If we wish to be endless or immortal in future, we must have to admit that we were beginningless or immortal in the past. Here some people may think, how is it possible that we existed in the past? If we apply the law that

because we exist today, we cannot come into existence out of nothing, then we will get a glimpse of the idea of pre-existence. And, for this reason, Vedanta teaches both immortality and pre-existence. No theory of immortality can be perfect or complete without admitting the pre-existence of the soul. No theory has successfully proved the necessity of an eternal future life in the case of one whose existence in the past has been proved to be unnecessary. If you say that your pre-existence was unnecessary, so your immortal life will be equally unnecessary. If the world could get along without you before, why should it not get along without you hereafter? What necessity will there be for an immortal life in future, if you did not exist before? If you have come into existence all on a sudden, you can go out of existence all on a sudden. Who will prevent us from becoming such an ephemeral substance?

In Vedanta, true immortality means eternal existence in the past as well as in the future. Pre-existence and immortality are so closely related to each other that if we deny one, we cannot accept the other. For logically we shall be incorrect; we shall go against the laws of nature, and our statement will be founded, not upon rational ground, but upon some dogma or doctrine which has no foundation. In Vedanta, therefore, we learn that each individual soul existed before the birth of the body. If we believe that we shall continue to exist after death, we shall have to admit that we existed in the past, otherwise, we cannot have immortal life in future. We have not come into existence for the first time out of nothing, but our present is a connecting link in the chain of our past and future existences. We may not know it, we may not possess the memory of our past lives, but still we existed just the same.

Here it may be asked, if we existed before our birth, why do we not remember? This is one of the strongest objections often raised against the belief in pre-existence. Some people deny the existence of the soul in the past, simply because they cannot remember the events of the past. Others again who hold memory as the standard of existence, say, if our memory of the present ceases to exist at the time of death, with it we shall also cease to be and we cannot be immortal, because they hold that memory is the standard of life, and if we do not remember, why we are not the same beings?

Vedanta answers these questions by saying that it is possible for us to remember our previous existences. Those who have read Raja Yoga, will recall the aphorism:

'By perceiving the *samskaras* one acquires the knowledge of past lives.'¹

Here the *samskaras* mean the impressions of the past experience which lie dormant in our subliminal self and are never lost. Memory is nothing but the awakening and rising of latent impressions above the threshold of consciousness. A Raja Yogi, through powerful concentration upon these dormant impressions of the subconscious mind, can remember all the events of his past lives. There have been many instances of the Indian Yogis who could know not only their own past lives, but correctly tell those of others. It is said that Buddha remembered five hundred of his previous births. Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

'Both thou and I, Arjuna, have gone through many births ; thou knowest them not ; but I know them all.'²

This shows that Sri Krishna remembered them, because he was a Yogi and Arjuna could not remember, because he had not the power to do so.

Our subliminal self or the subconscious mind is the store-house of all the impressions that we gather through our experiences during our life-time. They are stored up or pigeon-holed there in the *chitta*, as it is called in Vedanta. The *chitta* means the same subconscious mind or subliminal self which is the store-house of all impressions and experiences.³ These impressions remain latent, until favourable conditions rouse them and bring them out in the plane of consciousness. Here let us take an illustration. In a dark room, pictures are thrown on a screen by lantern-slides. The room is absolutely dark. We are looking at the picture. Suppose we open a window and allow the rays of the midday sun to fall upon the screen. Would we be able to see those pictures ? No, because the more powerful flood of light of the sun will subdue the light of the lantern

¹ Vide *Patanjala-darsana*, 3-18

² तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि न त्वं वेत्थ परन्तप ।—भगवद्गीता ४।५

³ Here the *chitta* means the mind or the *manas*

and the pictures. But although they are invisible to our eyes, yet we cannot deny their existence on the screen. Similarly the pictures of the events of our previous lives upon the screen of the subliminal self may be invisible to us at present, but they exist there. Why are they invisible to us now? Because the powerful light of the sense-consciousness has subdued them. If we close the windows and the door of our senses from outside contact and darken the inner chamber of our self, then by focussing the light of consciousness and concentrating the mental rays we shall be able to know and remember our past lives as well as the events and experiences thereof. Those who wish to develop their memory and remember their past, should practise Raja Yoga and learn the method of acquiring the power of concentration by shutting the doors and the windows of their senses. That power of concentration must be helped by the power of self-control, i.e. by controlling the windows and the doors of our own senses.

These dormant impressions, whether we remember them or not, are the chief factors in moulding our individual characters with which we are born, and they are the causes of the inequalities and diversities which we find around us. When we study the characters and the powers of the geniuses and the prodigies, we cannot deny the pre-existence of the soul. Whatever the soul has mastered in a previous life, it manifests in the present. If we possess wisdom and knowledge which we gathered in our previous lives, then it matters very little, whether or not we remember the particular events or the struggles which we went through in order to gain that knowledge. Those particular things may not come to us in our memory, but we have not lost the wisdom. Now study your own present life and you will see that in this life you have gained some experience. The particular events and struggles which you went through, are passing out of your memory, but the knowledge which you have gained through that experience, has moulded your character and has shaped you in a different manner. You will not have to go through those different events again to remember how you acquired that experience, is not necessary, and the wisdom gained is quite enough.

Then again we find among ourselves persons who are born with some wonderful powers. Take, for instance, the power

of self-control. One is born with the power of self-control highly developed and that self-control may not be acquired by another after years of hard struggle. Why is there this difference? Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was born with the God-consciousness and he went into the highest state of *samadhi* when he was four years old. But this state is very difficult for other Yogis to acquire. There was a Yogi who came to see Sri Ramakrishna. He was an old man and possessed of wonderful powers, and he said: 'I have struggled for forty years to acquire that state which is natural with you. Sankaracharya, the great commentator of the Vedanta philosophy, wrote his commentary when he was twelve years of age. There are a very few thinkers and philosophers in the world who can understand the spirit of his writings. They are so deep and sublime that ordinary minds cannot grasp them. There are many such instances which show that pre-existence is a fact and that these latent or dormant impressions of the previous lives are the chief factors in moulding the individual character without depending upon the memory of the past. Because we cannot remember our past. But because of the loss of memory of the particular events, the soul's progress is not arrested. The soul will continue to progress further even though the memory may be weak.

Each individual soul possesses the store-house of his previous experiences in the background in the subconscious mind. Take the instance of two lovers. Now what is love? It has already been explained that it is the attraction between the two souls. This love does not die with the death of the body. True love survives after death and continues to grow, and becomes stronger and stronger. Eventually it brings the two souls together and makes them one. The theory of pre-existence alone can explain why the two souls at the first sight know each other and become attached to each other by the tie of friendship. This mutual love will continue to grow and will become stronger and in the end will bring these lovers together no matter where they go. Therefore Vedanta does not say that death of the body will end the attraction of the attachment of the two souls, but as the souls are immortal, their relation will continue for ever. But we must not forget that relation and love must be mutual. If you love some one and that person

does not love you, it will be one-sided. It will not bring the two souls together. So there must be a mutual attraction. In Vedanta, we learn that as immortality means the continued existence in the eternal future, so pre-existence means the continued existence in the eternal past. The one cannot exist without the other. Each of these only expresses the one half of our soul-life which is eternal and both of these together make a complete whole, and that is the eternal soul-life. It existed before and it was always unborn, and, therefore, it will continue to exist in the future for ever. Our present life is the resultant of the past and our future will be the resultant of the present. Nothing will be lost.

Modern spiritualism has thrown a little light upon the future that even the departed spirits do remember their past relations. This shows that memory does not depend entirely upon the physical organism, but goes with the soul wherever the soul goes. That is the real memory. The physical organism may be destroyed, but memory lives. It is the body through which the subliminal self is reproducing powers which are latent in it. So our present life is the resultant of the past. It contains all the previous impressions and experiences of past lives and only under certain conditions they can be remembered. But here we must remember that immortality does not necessarily imply that we should go to heaven to eternally enjoy the celestial pleasures, or to go to eternal of our evil deeds. These ideas are not necessarily included in the meaning of immortality. According to Vedanta, immortality includes the meaning of progress, i.e. progress of growth and evolution of the soul from lower to the higher stages of development. It also includes the idea that each individual soul will manifest the powers which are already latent in the soul by going through different stages of growth and development until perfection and omniscience and omnipresence are acquired. In order to attain to this and to accomplish this highest end, the soul must manifest itself in various stages of life and gain experience. That cause which brought us on the plane of existence, will continue to bring us here again in future. If the same cause remains in us even after the death of the body, then nothing can prevent us from coming back to this plane of existence in order to fulfil our desires and purposes. This idea

leads to the theories of rebirth and reincarnation of the individual soul. The rebirth and reincarnation of the individual soul is based upon the truth of the eternality of the soul-life which is expressed by pre-existence and immortality. The exodus of the soul after death into heaven or into some realm of punishment or lower realm depends entirely upon the thoughts and deeds of the individual soul, and the soul's stay in these realms is temporary and dependent upon the condition of reaping the results of those thoughts and deeds. That is, the soul will remain there as long as it has not thoroughly reaped the fruits of its thoughts and deeds. At the expiration of that time, the inmates of heavens and other realms will come back on this plane, in order to gain further experience and more powers and knowledge until perfection is reached. Vedanta does not say that heaven is eternal, but it is temporary and non-eternal, and the soul has the power to transcend heaven or to go beyond all celestial realms. Why should we be limited to one particular spot? If we do not care to return to this realm of phenomena, we shall be dissatisfied even when we have gone to heaven. Then will come the time when we shall try to go further beyond until we have become absolutely perfect and divine. Therefore it is said in Vedanta:

'Even the highest heaven is temporary and non-eternal. The realms that exist between the earth and the highest heaven, mark only the phenomenal growth and progress of the individual souls. Those, who go there and remain there, are subject to birth and rebirth. They will come back again. But those who have attained to perfection transcend all heavens, understand eternal life and remain perfect for ever and ever.'³

³ Cf. *Bhagavad Gita*, VIII, 16-27.

CHAPTER IX

SCIENCE AND IMMORTALITY

The popular belief in Christendom is that Jesus the Christ brought the eternal life and immortality to light and that immortality cannot be obtained except through him, as if this conception of eternal life, or eternal life after death, which is understood by immortality, did not exist before the advent of the illustrious Son of Man. But the students of comparative religions find that in ancient times, long before the Christian era, this same conception of eternal or immortal life existed among the ancient nations like the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Hindus, and other different branches of the Aryan nation, such as Zoroastrians, the ancient Greeks, Romans, Scandinavians, and so on.

If we study the most ancient records in Egypt, which go back between 12000 and 8000 B.C., we shall find in those earliest records that the ancient Egyptians had a belief in the resurrection of the body as well as in eternal life for those who were righteous. The crude idea of resurrection of the body was afterwards rejected by the priests and the speculators in Egypt when the idea of a 'double' or soul as independent of the gross material body, developed. But the ignorant masses kept up the belief in the resurrection of the material or corruptible body, just as we find today it is upheld by the majority of believers in orthodox Christianity. The ignorant classes cannot believe that the soul can be separated from the body and can live without the body. They believe that the soul clings to the body. Attachment to the gross material form is so great that we cannot think for a moment that we can do without the body, or can exist without this material form which we have clothed with so much care and which we have kept up with beautiful things and nice dishes, and so on.

Among the writings of the old Egyptians who lived in the time of the fifth dynasty, that is, in 400 B.C., we find such expressions as,

The soul to heaven, the body to earth,
The heaven hath thy soul, the earth thy body.

You will have to remember that 3500 years before the birth of Christ such expressions were uttered and written down by the thinkers of Egypt and these ancient Egyptians believed that the souls of the righteous would go to heaven, enjoy celestial pleasures, and would eat and drink because they would have a light, active and etherial body, and, therefore, they needed food and drink. That was their conception and it was for that reason the relatives and the friends of the deceased used to put food in the grave and sometimes they would place amulets and other charms in the graves, believing that the departed ones might need such things to protect themselves against the evil influences. And again in some other writings, we find that the souls of the deceased would go to heaven and they were apparently in white linen, they wore white sandals on their feet, and they walked in the fields of peace, sat with gods, and ate the food of light. There were canals, water courses, roads, boats, chariots, horses, and the duplicates of all these things which we find on this plane, in heaven, and the enjoyment of all these pleasures and comforts, lasting throughout eternity, was the meaning of immortality according to these ancient Egyptians¹. They believed that the souls of these departed ones would go to heaven and enjoy all these celestial pleasures, the highest ideals of pleasures we can enjoy on this plane which became eternal, and the enjoyment of these pleasures throughout eternity was the meaning they gave to immortality. We must remember that by 'eternity' we do not mean a million or a thousand million years, but a time without end. Can you grasp the meaning of eternity, a time without end, enjoying these pleasures? A similar belief we find among the ancient Greeks in the Elysium Fields. The Greeks believed that the righteous ones who went to the Elysium Field, would continue to enjoy the celestial pleasures throughout eternity. Each of the deceased ones would resume the pleasures and occupations in which they delighted during their earthly career. Such a belief prevails among the Swedenborgians and other churches even to this day. Not long ago a

¹ Cf. Swami Abhedananda: *Path of Realization*.

clergyman of the city of New York wrote an article in a newspaper in which he said:

'The activities of our beings on this earth will be the activities of our beings in heaven. We cannot change this; it cannot be changed, but we must find and look for such occupations. In whatever form of existence, we can conceive of the occupations of life, must shadow and type the occupations of heaven, and in nobler and in higher forms, we must go on doing what we are doing today on this earth.'

If this remark be true, I would like to know how many of our cooks, waitresses, lawyers, bell-boys, and street cleaners would like to continue the same work throughout eternity and without having an end of time. I would like to know how many would like to go on doing them.

Among the pious Christians, we find the belief that the enjoyments of heaven and the conception of the eternal life are connected with a belief that the everlasting playing upon a harp would be the principal occupation in heaven. There is a hymn which used to be sung in the churches and it gives a description of the heavenly enjoyments, where the Sabbaths never end.

So we see that before the time of Christ there was a belief in the eternal life among the Chaldeans, Egyptians, and Greeks. Among the Chinese, the Hindus, and the Zoroastrians, we find a similar belief in the eternal life and the celestial pleasures in heaven. So when we examine the dogma of the Christian theologians that Jesus the Christ brought to light for the first time in immortal life, we stop and ask the question whether it is true or not. Jesus the Christ might have enlightened certain tribes among the Jews who did not believe in a life hereafter or the life after death, but he did not bring that idea to the world for the first time; and even the crude idea of resurrection after death which prevailed among the Jews at the time of Christ, was taken from the Parsees during the Babylonian Captivity (586-538 B.C.). If we read the Zend Avesta, we shall find that each individual, howsoever good or wicked he may be, must resurrect on the third day after death and then must go to heaven or to some place of punishment.

That idea prevailed among the Jews. The Pharisees accepted it ; the Sadducees rejected it, and the other class of orthodox Jews repudiated it.

So we find by studying the other religions of the world that this belief was not introduced for the first time, but has come to mean the eternal life in heaven. But yet the question of immortality is a very difficult problem. Most of the thinkers and the metaphysicians of the world have tried to solve this problem of immortality. Some of them have arrived at certain conclusions which are either for or against the existence of the eternal life after death. But if we analyse the meaning of the word immortality, we know that it means deathlessness or the state which is not subject to death. Then comes the question, what is death ? If by death we mean destruction, annihilation, and absolute dissolution of universe into nothingness, then there is no one in this world who is subject to such a death or annihilation. Science has proved that matter as well as force are indestructible. So every particle of matter, however minute or gross it may be, is not subject to absolute destruction or death ; and in that sense, we must say that matter is immortal, force is immortal, and energy is immortal, because they are not subject to either destruction or annihilation. The old gross conception of death is that it is a kind of sleep. The spirit or the soul goes into unconsciousness at the time of death, and in that slumber of unconsciousness, the soul remains until the morning of resurrection when it is again combined with the body. Both the body and the soul go to heaven or to hell, awaiting the judgment of the merciful Father. Death was regarded by the Christian theologians as the greatest enemy of the mortals and it meant the doom of the soul throughout all eternity. The good soul remained good forever and the wicked suffered throughout all eternity. That dreary conception of death still prevails among a certain class of the Christian believers, and the horror and despair also permeate the atmosphere of the sacred shrines under the vaults of holy places and the people tremble with fear when they think of the approach of death. Because it stamps, fixes the doom of the individual soul, and stereotypes the individual so that it lasts for ever. Again the wicked man who has no religion, will have to suffer throughout eternity. Now science has opened our

eyes to the fact that death is not such an evil. Science says that death is not an enemy attacking life and we cannot live without dying, and death is also a constant continuation of life. In fact, growth would be impossible if there were no death. So there is no reason to fear death.

A scientific thinker does not fear death, but regards it as a necessity for change or growth. By death, science means a change, i.e., change from one form into another. In our lifetime, we see that naturally every seventh year we have almost a new body and every molecule of our body is constantly changing. Every microscopic cell in our organism is producing the new forms. The old forms are dying and different new forms are coming up. When you plant a tree, you will see how the seed dies before the plant begins to grow. So death is the beginning of a new stage of life, and, therefore, we must not cling to that old belief, thinking that we must regard death as the constant enemy of life, but we must regard as a friend of life. Now if by death we understand a change, then the word '*immortality*' will receive a new meaning; that is, it will take that state which does not die and is not subject to death. Or, in other words, *immortality* means a state which is absolute, unchangeable, deathless or absolutely unchangeable. So the real meaning of *immortality* is persisting in existence, without being subject to any change whatever. Now if that be the meaning of *immortality*, is there any state which is absolutely free from changes of all kinds? This is a great question. The answer to this question is very deep. We shall have to analyse the whole phenomenal world to find out if such a thing as unchangeability exists. For science tells us that everything is subject to a change and everywhere we see the signs of change and decay. You all know how the solar system has come into existence from one mass of nebulous matter. Gradually it becomes congealed from that gaseous form and becomes solid. Then again it goes back to that gaseous state. Our physical bodies are subject to change. In fact, our bodies are for ever changing. If you can imagine yourself as a whirlpool in ether, or if you have seen your hand through the X-rays, then you will know what your body is like. All around yourself there are the same ethereal particles of matter in a homogeneous mass which is an impenetrable thick solid substance. There is no

space between the particles and you cannot separate them. In that mass, there is a little eddy here and there and that we call our bodies. Every minute cell of the body is constantly under change. We understand by sensation that something comes from the external world, either in the form of light vibration or in the form of air vibration and that affects our nervous systems, produces certain change in the optical nerves and different nerves of the brain cells, and there a certain vibration is produced and that vibration is interpreted by consciousness change. So we see at every step that there is a change, and without change we cannot hear any sound and cannot see any colour and cannot smell anything. All the feelings and thoughts are certain kinds of vibrations. They grow and disappear. One range of vibration shifts us on a certain region of consciousness and other range produces other vibrations of emotions.

So all the vibrations mean change. Our whole being also is subject to change. Then where is that immortal existence, we ask this question to science. But science does not answer. There is no such thing in the world as the absolute unchangeability. The phenomena of the world must change. Anything that exists in time and space, is subject to change, and so with any form we can imagine. The form may be of matter or ether, but in either case, it is subject to change. Now if by 'immortality' we mean that the soul will be clothed with a new form and will go to heaven and enjoy celestial pleasures during eternity, clothed in ethereal form and without any change throughout eternity, can we imagine an ethereal form which will last like a statue, because any emotion or feeling presupposes some kind of change so that it will have a body which would not be subject to any kind of change? No, we cannot conceive of such a thing. So immortality cannot be applied to the celestial bodies, no matter how fine or ethereal they may be.

If we analyse the conception of pleasure, we find that we cannot have any feeling of pleasure if we have no conception of pain. Similarly if we have no conception of pain, we could have no conception of pleasure. We can only know what one feeling is, by comparing it with other feeling we had before and also knowing the difference. And then if we are going to enjoy pleasure throughout eternity, we must have some sort of conception of pain, and otherwise we cannot enjoy

pleasure throughout eternity. It is for that reason those who believe in an eternity, will have to believe in eternal hell fire. The underlying truth of it is that we cannot enjoy the one without experiencing the other.

In the gross descriptions of hell and heaven, we find that there is a glass wall, separating hell from heaven, through which the souls, enjoying celestial pleasures, can see the others suffering and can compare and enjoy their pleasures; otherwise there is no enjoyment. It would be truly impossible for us to enjoy that pleasure if we enjoy that all the time and have no break. Now if we like music and hear music day and night without doing anything else, music would be a pleasure no more to us and within six hours we would be tired of it. If we see one colour all the time, it would no longer be a colour. If we can go to heaven and remain there throughout eternity, it would be no pleasure at all. Now under all these conditions we cannot find that eternal life in heaven with a finer body in the meaning of immortality, nor the enjoyment of celestial pleasures of the same kind without having any condition for comparison, is the meaning of immortality. Those who believe that immortality means a personal immortality, do not understand the meaning of the word 'personality'. Now what is the meaning of personality? It is a kind of mask, it is a garment of the mind. We have read of double, triple and quadruple personalities. There was a girl in England who had ten personalities, each of which was distinct. So by personality we must not understand a certain state of consciousness. It is like an assumed character on the stage. When the individual soul assumes a certain character and plays a certain part in the drama of life, then that particular character is the particular personality for the time being.² When different ideas develop and different tendencies and desires appear, then different personalities come up. Then we forget our old personality. So, if we analyse our personality, we will find that it is subject to disease, decay and death. Therefore, personality does not mean the absolute unchangeable state either on this plane or in heaven.

Some persons believe that immortality is a conditional one

² Cf 'Individuality and personality' in the Swami's book, *True Psychology*.

which is not a natural gift, but is a certain gift of God to certain individuals. Then comes the question as to what kind of gift it is and under what conditions it is received. Who will decide how many degrees above error one must be in order to obtain that gift from God? Some people may say a certain modes of living and work and the devotional exercise are sufficient for receiving the gift. Still if we analyse these devotional exercises and mental and physical works, we will find that all our actions are governed by the law of action and reaction, or by the law of cause and sequence. Every cause must produce an effect. Now if the result be eternal or everlasting, the cause must be eternal or everlasting, because a finite cause can never produce an infinite result. It is against the law of nature. Now call our actions either good or evil. If we add all our good and evil deeds or actions during a lifetime, even of a hundred years, they cannot be unlimited. The effect, therefore, cannot be unlimited. Realize then that cause must be unlimited too. God cannot even change that law, because, no matter how powerful He may be, it is His own law. Can we imagine the law of cause and sequence stopping for a second? No; otherwise the whole universe would fall to pieces. So those who believe that God changes the law of nature, are simply making some statements which have no ground whatsoever. We cannot take any stock in those statements. So God cannot give a free gift to any individual indiscriminately, because the theologians say that there must be some kind of devotional exercises to bring that gift. Now if we depend upon some devotional exercise, then that is also a limited cause and must produce a limited effect. Then everlasting life as the reward of all our good acts, is an impossibility. We cannot get it, because it would be contrary to the laws of nature. Therefore all the philosophers in India do not believe in such a statement. They believe in many heavens, and by the law of action and reaction, they try to explain that the earthly life is subject to change like the heavenly pleasures. Therefore eternal life is not eternal, it is temporary. Millions and millions of years, when compared to eternity, would appear to us like a flash of light, as it is temporary. Therefore all the great philosophers in India have said:

‘From the highest heaven to the limit of the universe all

these different places of existence are subject to growth and change.³

Those who do good deeds, go to heaven, may remain there till their time expires, and then they go to some other realms. They may return to this earth, or if they go to heaven, they enjoy celestial pleasures there for thousands of years. But it must end. Even if we get the celestial bodies, those bodies are subject to change. Then all those higher beings, the angels and the archangels who dwell in those celestial regions, are limited. They may have the psychic perception, but still there is limitation. And that conception we find in no other religion or philosophy, except in the writings of the great thinkers of the vedic age. Because the thinkers and the seers of the ancient vedic age went deeper and so they would not accept anything on hearsay. A revelation of God, which does not appeal to reason, does not touch our own senses, does not conform to all the laws of nature, and cannot be the truth. If Christ was possessed of immortal life, then each one of us must have it by birthright, otherwise Christ had not got it. There is one universal law just as the law of light, or the law of action and reaction, or the law of cause and sequence. They are all alike, and we find at every step this law prevails. As Christian science says:

Discover the laws of nature ; if you cannot harmonize the truths of Christ with the laws of nature, you have not discovered any truth.

Your going to heaven does not mean the attainment of immortality, and having a celestial body does not also mean that. Then what is the true meaning of immortality ? Is it possible to have anything unchangeable in this world of changes ? This question disturbed also the mind of the thinkers long ago, and today Kant, Huxley and Ernst Haeckel have tried to discover something which is the unchangeable Reality and the absolute Truth. But have they really discovered it ? I think that they are not successful.

Those who have searched this truth, can be divided into two classes. The one may be classed as the materialists who

³ *Bhagavad Gita*, VIII. 16.

deny the existence of the soul as separate from the material body, and according to them, all such questions of immortality, God, and souls are mere waste of time and energy. Of course, they try to find out everything from the matter and the force. They say that force is immortal, and energy is immortal, and that is all. But can we remain contented with those conclusions of the great materialistic thinkers of the world? The materialistic thinkers are not the product of the twentieth century alone. In olden times and even in the vedic age, there were those who denied the existence of anything that existed beyond the range of the sense perception. They denied anything that is abstract. They did not find that soul exists independently of the body. They rather mixed up the soul with the material body.

Among modern scientists too you will find that there is such a class and so their arguments do not satisfy our minds. Even if they tell us that there is no soul, yet a voice within tells us 'go and search again, and you will find something better'. So if we go on searching, at every step we hear a voice speaking from within that there is something immortal. Otherwise this question of immortality would never arise. Because our longing for immortality is too strong, we cannot resist it. Try to think of yourself as dead, but you cannot. You may think of your body as lying dead, but you are standing beside it and watching over it. You cannot think of yourself as non-existent, because the very idea that you are dead or have ceased to exist, presupposes that you are conscious of that idea, and, therefore, you cannot be this. Why is it that if our whole nature was not meant to last throughout eternity, we have such an idea? It is a part and parcel of our being and we must go on searching until we find it. Those who imagine that the body and the soul last throughout eternity, are mistaken. The atoms will arise, because they are indestructible. But like the material body, the astral body is destructible. The finer etherial form which may manifest itself through cells, is also destructible, it is earthly. Then, where is the immortal spark of our own being? In searching within the body as well as in the realms of mind and intellect the great thinkers and inspired sages of the vedic age declared that our soul is immortal. The soul is like a receptacle of a finer substance which is like the source

of our conscious existence and that source is immortal. It is not subject to change and they called it the *Atman*. It is not the same as ego, but it is the Knower of the ego. It is not same as 'I', but that, by which we know ourselves it is I am standing here, I am hearing, and that is our true Self; that is the *Atman*. You may say: 'How can we know the existence of such a thing?' You do not have to search outside, as it is already within. But tell me, are you ever conscious of your brain? You will say, no, you do not know that you are the interpreter of the brain. Similarly it may be asked that if the source of consciousness is the source of matter, then who knows matter? Matter does not know itself, and therefore there must be someone other than matter, who knows matter.

Modern science has resolved the whole phenomenal universe into three states and has explained that those states are matter, energy and consciousness. These three states or things are the fundamental principles of the universe. If you have studied science or any of the philosophies of the world, you will find these three things. But, in truth, matter and energy are inseparable. They are different states of the same substance. Then there comes the third thing, consciousness. Most of the materialistic thinkers try to separate or divorce this consciousness from matter and force, and the idealists try to divorce matter and force from mind or consciousness. A modern Christian scientist says that there is no matter, it is all mind and all consciousness. Now ask them what they mean by mind, and what they mean by matter. They will say that they do not know. In fact, all these three, matter, force and consciousness are indestructible, incorruptible and eternal. The question comes up: what is the nature of the third substance? If matter is indestructible, force is indestructible, then what becomes of consciousness? Shall we believe it to be the result of matter and force, as the materialists declare? When you have the conception of matter, it is a state of consciousness, i.e., knowingness. When you have conception of force or energy, it is a material state. They are incorruptible and indestructible. If two states of consciousness be indestructible, then what will be the nature of consciousness itself? Will it be indestructible? If the fruit of the tree is indestructible and eternal, can you believe that the tree is destructible and non-eternal? These

are the fruits of the tree of consciousness, and if the two states of consciousness be indestructible and eternal, then the tree of consciousness is also indestructible and eternal. Really we cannot know the existence of matter, if we are unconscious. Put a scientist into the chloroform state and ask him if he is conscious of the existence of matter. Surely he will say that he does not know, as he is unconscious. You may look through a microscope at an atom and divide it into subdivisions i.e. into which you divide it into an electron or an ion. If these be incorruptible and indestructible, then the two states are also indestructible. It is always the knower which knows. Matter does not know and energy does not know, and this knower is our true Self. It is not far from us, but it is the innermost being within us.

Your mental condition may change, you may be in anger, you may have another passion, you may have certain desire, you may think of the body, and you may think of yourself as wicked or spiritual, but all the time you know that these feelings are nothing but different states of your consciousness. It is the background of the spirit or of your personality like the background of the canvas, upon which your personality is painted by the divine hand. You may change the picture, but the canvas will remain always the same. We can realize our true Self which will be more everlasting than the celestial pleasure, and which will be as eternal as Divinity itself.

The books will not reveal this Truth. By reading the books and the scriptures and their commentaries, we cannot know the absolute Truth. We can neither understand our immortal nature by thought, nor by works, and nor by the devotional exercises, but if we search it with our heart, we can understand our immortal nature. Separate the source of consciousness from its attachment to the material things, analyse your own nature and discriminate, and then see what part is in you that is unchanging like the witness which is the knower of the body and of the sense perceptions, intellect, apprehensions and feeling. Enter into the cave of your heart and you will be able to realize the *Atman*. Through the practices of concentration and meditation you enter into the state of the superconsciousness and there you will be free. There you will realize that you are beyond the body, beyond the mind and

beyond the intellect and death. Death cannot touch you then, and the fear of death will vanish from you for ever. Then you will know that fire cannot burn you, water cannot moisten you, air cannot dry you, and swords cannot pierce you, but you are immortal, unchanging, eternal, everlasting, and divine¹. Then no fear of death exists. Because all fear proceeds from ignorance and selfishness and when you have eliminated all ignorance, the Divine illumination will come, the sun of wisdom will shine above the horizon of your mental plane, and there you will see the light of the eternal Truth, and then you will see what is real and immortal. If you study the scriptures of the Hindus, you will find that the divine thought of immortality is the highest ideal of the Hindu scriptures. But how is it to be obtained? It will be obtained by being conscious of your immortal nature. Because knowing is being. When you know yourself as immortal, you are immortal. But if you know yourself as a limited physical thing, you are going to die. All our knowledge is a state of consciousness. So if you change this state of consciousness, you will never die. Because you are yourself the changeless principle, and so change of any kind will not affect you. Change is fleeting and unreal, but you are immortal. When you know God, you have attained everything. To know God means to be God; '*brahmavid brahmaiva bhavati*'. So if you wish to know God, you must know your true self which is immortal, divine, eternal, everlasting and one.

¹ *Bhagavad Gita*, II 23 24.

CHAPTER X

THE SPIRITUALISM

The question often rises in our minds what exists after death ? This question rises today and it will rise always in the minds of all. The same question was asked by the kings and the beggars, by the sages and the saints, and by the philosophers, the thinkers and the religionists of all countries all over the world. We are discussing it today and tomorrow and the same question will rise again in other minds. For the moment we might forget, and we might not take heed of the condition after death of the physical body, but the time is sure to come when we shall wake up and would ask the same question. We might be absorbed in our daily occupations, in the struggles for existence, and in troubles and tribulations which we have to encounter every day. We may forget that we will live after death or what will happen after death. But as soon as we see someone passes away and the relatives, the dearest and the nearest friends pass out of the body, we stop and think where have they gone. What has become of the body? The body is going to decompose. What was there to keep it alive and where has it gone now ? The same question will arise again and again and disturb the peace of our minds, and until we find the proper solution of that question, we can never have peace in our minds.

But before we find the solution of that problem, we discover at the very threshold of our inquiry an adamant wall standing before us which is almost impossible to break through. The weak intellects stop here. The feeble minds with feeble efforts fail to go beyond that wall, and that wall is nothing but a belief that the body is the producer of the soul and that the soul is the result of the functions of the organism of this gross material body. The popular belief that every soul will rise after death, because of the miraculous resurrection of one particular individual at a certain time does not appeal to our minds any more. We have outgrown those states of foolish belief and blind faith. We wish to get the positive

proofs. We want to discuss the subject psychologically, metaphysically, and scientifically. Now let us see whether this theory that the body produces the soul, is correct.

There are three theories given in the attempts to prove the existence of the soul: the one is the production theory, the second is the combination theory, and the third is the transmission theory. The production theory is the theory described by the atheists, agnostics, materialists and evolutionists. They believe that the body produces the soul, but they do not answer the question how the body can produce the soul which is a mass of thought, or a mass of intelligence, or whatever they may call it. These materialistic thinkers might tell you that a body is produced of other bodies i.e. the bodies of the parents. But what force is there that holds all the molecules and the particles of matter together and combines them, and produces your body in one particular form and my body in another form? What makes these distinctions, they do not answer those questions. They say that it is unknown to us and it is a mystery, but the bodies of the parents produce the bodies of the children and this is true. But what produces the bodies of the parents? They say that their parents produce the bodies. But that is not the true answer. In trying to explain this theory, they produce another combination of matter without explaining the forces which combine and preproduce these conditions. They simply make an assertion and that assertion leads to a fallacy that the body produces a body, but that is not the real cause that produces the human body. It is like explaining the cause by the effect; it is like putting the cart before the horse. So the explanation does not appeal to our minds. At the same time we notice that among the hosts of the physiologists, the medical practitioners and the pathologists, there is a belief that the body produces the soul of thought, intelligence, consciousness, and whatever you may call the mind, and some have gone so far as to locate the particular functions of the mind in some particular parts of the brain. For instance, when we see the objects before our presence, particular convolutions of the brain are stimulated, and when we hear a sound, our tympanal lobes are stimulated, and so on. Those who believe in the production theory, tell that the mind is conterminous with the functions of the brain as well as with the nervous states and

they try to explain that so long as the brain is active, the mind exists, but when the brain stops its functions, the mind is dead, because the mind cannot live independent of the functions of the brain. Their theory is that certain impressions come through our nerves and they are poured into the brain by the peculiar functions of the brain. They are metamorphosed into ideas, thoughts, emotions, feelings, sensations, expressions of the face, speech, and so on. Just as foodstuff, after falling into the stomach, is metamorphosed and changed into different elements by digestion, and as the stomach is functioning to produce digestion and the liver is to secrete bile, so the brain secretes thoughts, intelligence, and consciousness. And that is their argument. According to them, the impressions are like the material bodies or the body-stuffs that go into our nerves and fall into the pot of the brain and are instantly changed into thought, intelligence, ideas, and so on.

But when we examine the brain properly, we find that a man can live and perform his functions even when half of his brain is diseased and decayed. Such cases have been experimented upon and recorded. There is a great medical surgeon and physician in New York city, Doctor Thompson who is an authority in the Roosevelt Hospital. He has written a book in which he describes the records and statistics that have been taken after post-mortem examinations. A man had lost half of his brain. It was absolutely gone and in his whole lifetime, he did not know at what time he had lost the half of his brain and it made no change in his mode of life, in his thoughts, and in his occupation. He could utilize the one half of the brain that was in good condition and make it perform the functions of both the halves.

A man who uses his right hand, his centre of speech is on the left side of the brain. Now this is one of the most important proofs that has been brought out by scientific men of this age. Our speech-centre depends upon the action of our arms to a great extent. A left-handed man has his speech-centre developed on the right side of the brain and the right-handed man has his speech-centre on the left side of the brain. If one half of the brain is decayed or diseased and if that man be right-handed and the left side of the brain is diseased, he becomes absolutely mute and dumb and he cannot speak. But if he uses

the left hand, after a few days or a few weeks he will be able to develop a speech-centre on the right side of the brain and then he will be able to speak his language fluently. These are experimented, and are proved facts.

What do these prove? They prove that mind is something distinct from the brain and the brain is the instrument which is utilized by the soul, or the mind, or whatever you may call it. You may call it personality. But personality is not the result of the function of the brain. But, on the contrary, it is one who uses the instrument of the brain as if from outside. We may compare the brain with a piano. A piano can produce music when there is music in the soul of the musician. But there is no music in the piano. It must be in the conscious mind of the musician who must be outside of the piano and must play upon the keys. So there is music of all the harmonious activities of our body and mind and that harmony is in the mind of the soul and that soul is playing upon the cells of the nerve-centres in the brain from outside. As if the brain is overshadowed by some invisible entity who is playing upon the brain and producing its harmony, or if there be no harmony of music in the soul, there is discord which is manifested in ourselves. So the production theory has become almost absurd today. No scientific thinkers who have studied all these experiments, made by the great scientists of the world, can believe any more in the theory that the brain secretes the consciousness, as the liver secretes bile. It is an absolutely irrational statement.

The combination theory explains that the neural current is a stream which produces a stream of feelings. There is no connection between them, they are running simultaneously. Some of the psychologies that are taught in the schools and colleges, teach the idea that consciousness is a stream and a complex thing, made up of a stream of feelings and when these currents pass through the nerves ganglia and cortical walls, and these cortical walls make a resistance. This resistance produces a kind of nerve-glow or white heat-glow, and that glow is their consciousness. That is a very absurd idea.

We have another explanation better than this. But the point is that the transmission theory is more satisfactory. According to this theory, the soul or the mind is outside of the brain. It is not the result of the brain, but is something like

a self-conscious entity which is using the brain, just as a musician uses the piano and plays on the keys. Now that theory is generally accepted by all the spiritualists and the religionists and all the metaphysicians and the philosophers, and they understand the true language of the soul and its relation to the body. Those who do not believe in the transmission theory, cannot explain how these instances of phenomena which are recorded by the Psychical Research Society of America as well as those of Europe and elsewhere happen such as the appearance of the 'double'. For instance, when you are sitting in your room and you are absolutely in repose while conscious, reclining in a rocking chair or on a couch, you are alone and your mind is greatly disturbed by some business problem. You do not know how to answer it. Suppose there is no one to disturb you or to interfere you in any way in the room, or in the house. Your door is locked. Now suddenly you see your 'double'. This something is like yourself, coming out of you, going to the desk, taking a piece of paper and a pencil in hand, and solving your problem and leaving the written answer on the paper. Then you are dreaming, as it were, and suddenly you wake up and go to your desk and you find the solution. You remember that you saw your double, but you do not know what it is. It is like an apparition, There have been many such instances. How do you explain this? Who has done it? Did somebody else go into the etherial form which is similar to your own form from outside? Even if you believe that you admit the existence of intelligence or an intelligent entity which can exist without the material and gross physical body, that can satisfy your mind. But these cases cannot be explained by any other theory than the transmission theory. This transmission theory tells us that the double is the astral self of the individual and this astral self is something which can live independent of the gross material body; and this astral self can pass out and can appear in etherial form and perform many acts which our ordinary waking self cannot do. The astral doubles are sometimes perceived by the relatives and the friends of the dying persons.

It is found that the dying persons may have a very strong attachment to their children. If their children are going to be orphans; if there is no one to take care of them, and if their

relatives are at a distance, their great desire to help their children would make them project their astral body or double, and appear before the relatives, and give a sudden message. Sometimes it happens after the death of the individual, and, in most cases, it is at the time of death, just at the moment when the individual is passing out of the body or the minute before. There have been records of both kinds. Now how do you explain these if you do not believe in the transmission theory? If the soul is the result of the functions of the brain, then everything would be at an end. But it is not the fact. These experiments have proved that there is such a thing as a soul or a personality or an entity which is self-conscious and which continues to live even when the gross physical body is left behind. Vedanta accepts the transmission theory. It tells us that matter is one half of the universe which is the object, and the mind is the other half of the universe which is the subject. The one half of the universe cannot produce the other half and so they remain simultaneously. They are in existence from the very beginning. That is the existence of the mind and the matter. Matter is the object of perception, and mind is the perceiver. So you cannot have any sensation of perception of matter if there be no subject in you who perceives. Our knowledge of matter is nothing but a state of our mind. It is the state of consciousness. This consciousness must be prior to any condition of matter, or any experience of sensation or of feelings that are produced by the contact of matter with our senses. No one can deny the priority of consciousness, or of the self-consciousness. If you are unconscious, you cannot have any perception. So you see that every experience that we have is more or less subjective. We call our knowledge of matter is only a personal knowledge of the object, but a great deal of that knowledge is subjective, that is, we are conscious of our own minds. We cannot get out of our own minds anywhere. We cannot go into the chair or the table, and find out what is going on there and how the table affects our senses, and produces sensation, and if such sensations are the states of consciousness of our own mind, then we know that there is such a thing as a table or a chair; otherwise we can never do it. Now, one of the scientific facts is that motion produces nothing but motion. But our consciousness or intelligence is not motion.

Can you refute this? No, it is something beyond motion. It is what understands and knows motion. So how can motion produce the activity of the brain, or the activity of the molecules, of the nerves and of the brain cells? How can that motion produce something which does know itself? That is a proof against all the materialistic theories. Therefore to say that the soul is the result of the function of the brain which is the intelligent entity, is an impossibility.

Referring to that priority of the mind when you dissect a brain, for instance, and you do not find any such thing as the self-existing or the self-conscious entity, you deny the existence of a soul, and this very denial of that particular case presupposes the existence of another mind which must think that way the mind of the dissector. So in every instance there is the priority of the mind before any conception that you can make. If you say that you have no soul, it would be just as absurd, as if I say at this moment that I have no tongue. I am using the tongue while I am talking, and if I deny the existence of tongue, I would be a fool. Similarly, if you deny the existence of your own self as a self-conscious entity, you are using that self-conscious entity as a foundation, while you are denying it, which would be absurd and ridiculous. Now, after realizing this condition that the soul is that self-conscious entity which is prior to all the material conditions and is not the result of the motion, we ask the question whether that soul can retain its individuality. Now here you will notice little distinction between individuality and personality. Again many people get these mixed up.

Some people take personality as individuality and individuality as personality. But we will go to the root of these two words, and will keep the original meaning before our minds, and then we will have no more confusion. The word *personality* comes from the Latin *persona*, the mask. The personality is that particular consciousness which is related to the physical body. Thus you are Mr. or Mrs. or Miss. So and so. That is your personality. You are an active man; you are a businessman; you have hunger and thirst and all the limitations of the body. That is the mask which the individual is wearing at the present moment. But individuality is something which is beyond the body and is indivisible. That which is

indivisible, you cannot cut or disturb like your sense of 'I.' It is like an indivisible current. It is the continuity of one thought, the thought of 'I.' I was a school-boy, and I played with my school-mates. The same 'I' have gone through all these other experiences. Now I am standing or sitting here and that is identity or foundation or individuality which is indivisible. It is the property of your spiritual self, or the spiritual consciousness. It has no relation to your personality at all. Now that personality might be left here and might change ; but your individuality, the sense of 'I,' can never change, because that sense of 'I' will continue to exist with you, no matter where you go. You are an unit of force, and that unit is a self-conscious unit, and when you leave this body, you take that sense of 'I' with you, whether you have a gross physical, or an astral, or a causal body. You have always the sense of 'I' with you. When you dream, you have the sense of 'I' within ; when you are in sound sleep, you have this sense ; otherwise you would not remember that you slept and had no dreams. You can never get rid of this sense of 'I' unless you attain to the highest liberation or the freedom of the soul and become one with God. Then your individuality is infinite. Just as the individuality of Christ was not lost when he realized that he and his Father were one, but it became infinitely expanded. Therefore we can never lose our individuality. Sometimes some of the souls, after passing out of the body at the time of death, contract all the forces that are scattered all over the body and come to a nucleus like an atom, and there it may lose its personality for the time being.

This personality is subject to change and might be held in an earth-bound condition. If it has strong attachments to the relatives or the friends and if it cannot get over those attachments, it hovers around them, remains close to them, tries to help them to be loved by them, and there it is conscious of its personality. For instance, if I build a beautiful house and that beautiful house abounds in beautiful furniture and such things, and if I have devoted most of my time in decorating that house, I become so attached to it that after death I would dislike to leave that spot and I would remain right there, invisible. I might not be seen by others, but my strong attachment will hold me there in that place. I would

be wondering while my relatives and friends and all the dearest ones do not recognize me and there I have to suffer. Now that is what happens with certain people who do not know that they are dead. They retain their personality.

At the time of the war in Europe,¹ there were soldiers who died with the feelings of revenge, hatred and anger in their hearts. It is a fact that after death they found that they were continuously fighting. They projected the forms of their enemies and tried to fight against them. It is a state of unrest. It is just like a state of hell. There is a worse hellish condition after the death of the soldiers who fight in the battlefield in the spirit world than they have here. Sometimes a soul passes out suddenly when his body is blown into atoms through an explosion. The shock of that explosion is so great that the soul remains unconscious for a long time. There happens no further progress of this soul. Those who understand the spiritual laws, never advocate war, because we have no right to take the lives of the individuals, especially of our own brethren who have come to this world to develop their conditions. Instead of helping them, we are taking their lives, cutting it short suddenly by swords and by all kinds of instruments of war. It is a terrible state of affairs, and the souls, after passing out of this body, are in a state of the unconsciousness. They do not know where they are. Then they are in an utter confusion. They need help of someone to guide them and to make them realize that they have left their bodies. They need help for restoring their lost consciousness.

A story now comes to my mind, of what was supposed to have been a communication from one of the residents of that city, Los Angeles, who passed away in 1913. He was a Supreme Court Judge and he was supposed to communicate with this world through some friends. It was a very terrible condition for the particular woman whom he met in the other world and whom he knew in this material world. She was living in a boarding house and after she passed out, she was still living in a boarding house, and she was eating beef steak, meat and potatoes, but she did not like coffee. The coffee was very poor and she grumbled. She said: "It is terrible. I cannot

¹ World War I.

sit at the table with the same friends. And potatoes are not very good." But still she was hungry and she ate. Now that gives the idea of what we can do, when we are in an earth-bound condition. She did not realize that she had passed away, but she thought that she was still living. She thought that it was funny that she did not have the same or better friends than she had here in this world. That shows that we take all our desires with us after death and we manufacture these objects of enjoyment by our thoughts. The realm beyond death is the realm of the realized ideals, or of the realized thoughts. If we think of a piece of bread, the bread is there and we will eat. If we feel hungry, we are eating. If we think of coffee, we are drinking coffee. Thus we see how important it is for us to understand this that if we die with the attachment to any particular kind of food, or any particular kind of clothes or jewels, or anything in this life, we carry that attachment with us, and with our desire we manufacture those things out of the finer material in the spirit world. Instead of progressing and casting off these first conditions which are narrow and which limit the progress of the souls, we take them with us and continue to enjoy them until we go to sleep and wake up. If our good thoughts and good deeds would help us, then we could go on progressing. But many of the departed spirits remain in that state of delusion for a long time. Our time does not affect the spirits. Our thousand years may be five days to them, because ours is according to our standard and theirs according to their standard. So no one can say how long a soul will remain in any particular condition, but it is important that we should remember this law that we create our future, we create our destiny, and we build our character by our thoughts and deeds.

It is not that we suddenly get transformed and grow wings, but it is the continuity of this present life. Life after death means the continuity of this life only on another plane. But it is not a place. There is no space relation. It is like a wheel within a wheel. Just as you can hear the vibrations of different musical instruments, one can be of low vibration and another of high and both can exist without interfering with each other. At the same time you can hear both. Similarly around this earth there is a spirit world. It is like the fourth dimension. It is on another plane. All that exist here in this material

plane, do not exist there, because the space-relations do not exist there

Those who have firm faith and belief in a heaven, where the angels sing the praises of the Lord, where there would be peace like the peace on Sunday in a city, where everything is closed, or is in a peaceful church and those who believe in things like these, will find them there. Because all the human beings are attracted to those dream-like states which we call heaven. And there are many such heavens. The Moham-medan who believes in the *houris* and the drinking of wine and having fine air and plenty of shade, and if he holds that as an ideal, will go to a plane of consciousness where he will project all these ideas and make his own heaven.

But these conditions are not eternal. They are like dream states. There are many such heavens. Each nation and each particular tribe among different nations had held a certain belief of what they would enjoy after death in a celestial realm. For instance the Red Indian who has his belief in a hunting ground, goes to heaven like the hunting ground. He believes in that like the old Scandinavian going to Valhalla, where he would sit in front of Odin and he would fight with his other friends, and during the fight he would be wounded and then miraculously healed of his wounds. Then they would run and chase a wild boar and have a big feast and this will continue everyday throughout eternity. Some will find peace that way, but not throughout eternity. I have mentioned already that eternity is a long time, and even millions of years are not to be considered as eternity. Eternity means time without end and without beginning. It is just like a circle. Eternity forms always a circle. All progress must go up to a certain point and then it will come back again. Some go to heaven suddenly. At the time of the expiration of their celestial happiness, their other desires will wake up which are dormant for the time being and those will bring them down to this plane again. They will be born again as the human beings. Now you need not get frightened about it, for they had such desires. There is no one who forces them, but it is their desires. They are creating their own conditions. That is the law. No one punishes the wicked, no one rewards the virtuous, but the soul rewards and punishes itself as the result of its own thoughts and deeds. We

gravitate. You are here, because you have the desire to come to this world and enjoy certain pleasures and gain certain experiences which you would not get anywhere else. The same conditions prevail after you have gone to heaven. You will come back here again, and will gain some new experiences. And this is a great blessing that it is so, otherwise, it would be a very monotonous state of affairs to play on the same harp. I would not enjoy that. You might enjoy, because you have been trained to believe that is a high state. So the condition is this that after death we continue to live and go through different realms where we develop certain powers and each of them contains the potentialities and the possibilities. You must not think, three scores of years and ten in one plane have finished your manifestation. It could not be. The Christians have been taught that the Lord created them at the time of their births and they came suddenly out of nothing and they will continue to live for ever. That is not possible, because the eternal life does not mean that it has a beginning at one end and at the other end it is endless. It has already been said that you can imagine of a stick which you are holding at one end, and the other end would go to eternity and be endless. No, because what has a beginning, must have an end. That is the law of nature. No one can imagine having a beginning and an end. Some think that this physical body can be kept throughout eternity, but that is impossible, because that which has birth must die. Of course, it may go through a transformation, but it would not be the same body, just as we do not possess the same body which we had when we were babies. The baby-body is changed into the young body and that into the mature body, because every seven years every molecule of our body is renewed.

You have not the same brain, same sense of sight, and same sense of hearing; it is constantly changing. But, in the midst of these changes, there is something unchangeable, and unless you realize that something, you cannot expect to have permanent peace and happiness, because in the midst of all changes, you remain as the centre, around which all the changes are going on like a whirlpool. You are the self-conscious entity, which can never die. So have faith in yourself that you are immortal. By immortality is meant eternal life, both beginningless and

endless. No one has created you, and no one could create you out of nothing. God Himself could not also create, but He projects everything from within. So you existed first as a part of God and you have come here in this world through experience, and manifested your powers, and again you are going back to God. Thus you complete the circle. It is the play of the divine forces of nature, and you are only that manifestations. Each individual unit of the self-conscious entity will realize its infinite nature by going through a great many manifestations either in this cycle, or in a cycle that will come.

You must understand that the soul can come down from the heavenly plane to this plane of consciousness and be born again with more developed powers, either to gain new experiences, or to help others to gain knowledge. There are certain souls who are perfected and who come down consciously, remembering all that they have gone through. They remember it all, and they have come down through sheer joy, as it were, to help humanity and set an example like Christ or Buddha or other saviours. But we do not have that power. We gravitate, being forced by our past deeds. For instance, I have the desire to be one of the best artists and before I realize my ideal, if I suddenly pass away, I think that my desires will have gone for nothing. But that is not true, because they will bring me back again, and put me in the proper environment through the proper channel, so that I could realize my ideal of the artist once more. That is a great comfort that it is so. One plane of life is not enough. We have been told that everything was fixed before we came to this plane ; but how can one individual understand or know everything of this world of infinite phenomena unless they have infinite lives ?

For that reason the teachings of Vedanta are in perfect harmony with nature. It does not condemn any such ideas, but it puts them in their proper places. Some people have dreams of heavens, and they will go there. But if we are told that this heaven is an eternal state, we are hearing a statement which cannot be true. We must realize that the life after death is the continuation of the present life and we make our future according to our thoughts and deeds. We are the creators of our destiny, of our character, and of our future, and we will continue to live and come back and be born again on

this earth or on some other planet. We may go to some other planet where there are different conditions and we may develop up the infinite realm of this universal Spirit. There is no end of experiences, but a perfected soul reaches that state where there is no more birth, no more death, and no more disease, sorrow, or suffering. There reigns the absolute peace and happiness, perfect knowledge and wisdom which are the highest goal of human life¹.

¹ In the *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad* (4.4.6), we find :

तदेव सक्तः सह कर्मणैति

लिङ्गं मनो यत्र निषक्तमस्य ।

प्राप्यान्तं कर्मणस्तस्य यत् किञ्चेह करोत्ययम् ।

तस्माल्लोकात् पुनरैत्यस्मै लोकाय कर्मणे ॥

इति नु कामयमानः अथाकाममानः—योऽकामो निष्काम आप्तकामो न तस्य प्राणा

उत्क्रामन्ति, ब्रह्मैव सन्ब्रह्माप्येति ।

That is, being attached, he together with the work attains that result to which his subtle body (*sukshma-sariram* or *lingam*) or mind is attached. Exhausting the results of whatever work, he did in this life, he returns from that world to this for (fresh) work. Thus does the man who desires (transmigrates). But the man who does not desire (never transmigrates). Of him who is without desires, who is free from desire, the objects of whose desire have been attained, and to whom all objects of desire are but the self, the organs do not depart. Being but Brahman, he is merged in Brahman—Vide also the *Manduka Upanishad*, 3.2.2

CHAPTER XI

SPIRITUALISM AND VEDANTA

The *Gita* says:

यान्ति देवव्रत देवान् पितॄन् यान्ति पितृव्रताः ।
भूतानि यान्ति भूतेज्या यान्ति मदयाजिनोऽपि माम् ॥ ६।२४

The supreme Lord says: "The votaries of the gods or angels go to the gods: to the ancestors go the ancestor-worshippers. The spirit-worshippers go to the spirits; but those who are devoted to Me, attain to Me and reach perfection".

Modern spiritualism claims to have a supernatural origin like all other great religions of the world which have been founded upon the supernatural revelations. It has played its most important part in toning down the dogmas of the Christian theology in reforming the religious belief of the vast majority of the American people and in starting fresh inquiries and investigations in the realm beyond the grave. Within the last fifty years modern spiritualism have given wonderful demonstrations regarding the existence of the disembodied spirits who continue to live even after the dissolution of their gross material forms. It has brought comfort and consolation to the hearts of many people who were suffering from the evil effects of scepticism and unbelief, concerning a future life, caused by the dry theories of the atheistic, agnostic, and materialistic thinkers of the last century.

Through the help of modern spiritualism many of the educated and uneducated people of this country have now arrived at the conviction that there is such a thing as the human soul or a conscious entity which continues to exist after the death of the physical body. Modern spiritualism has taught that the souls of the dead are not destined to suffer eternally, but that they are comfortably situated, and do not forget their early friends and relatives, but, on the contrary, like the

ancestor-worship is to be found in almost all religions of the world. After studying the ancient religions of different countries, we find clear traces of this old form of spiritualism among the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Chinese, Parsees, Hindus, and other races inhabiting different parts of the world.

The ancient Egyptians, like the modern spiritualists, believed in the departed spirits. Their idea was that within the physical body of man there was a soul, having the shape of the gross body in every respect and with smaller hands, feet, and other limbs. It was like the 'double' or the counterpart of the physical man. When the physical man died, his counterpart or 'double' went out of the body and lived. The life of the 'double', according to the Egyptian belief, depended upon the condition of the material body i.e. so long as the gross form remained intact, the form of the 'double' would remain perfect. But if any part of the dead body was mutilated or injured, then the similar part of the 'double' would also be injured or destroyed. It was for this reason that they cared so much to preserve the dead bodies by making mummies and building pyramids. This belief was the fundamental principle of spiritualism and the ancestor-worship of the ancient Egyptians.

The Babylonians and the Chaldeans also believed in the departed spirits, but not exactly in the same manner as the Egyptians did. They believed in the wandering shade of the dead which was called 'ekimmu' i.e. a spectre. It was like the shape of the physical man with similar form, but they thought that it would meet with great misfortunes if the dead body were not buried with proper ceremonies, and so they observed a great many ceremonies in order to make the departed souls free from all misfortunes. The Babylonians believed that the souls of those dead bodies, which were not buried with proper ceremonies, could not enter the house of the dead, called 'arallu' i.e. the underground abode of the dead. It was like the 'sheol' of the Hebrews. Therefore, the Babylonians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians took special care in burying the dead. The embalming of the dead body, the building of monuments and tombstones and decorating of them with flowers, wreaths, flags, and other grave-offerings, which are practised today by the Christian nations in Europe and America, are but the

remnants of the ancestor-worship of the ancient Babylonians and Chaldeans. These customs have been handed down to us and we now blindly follow them without knowing their original meaning.

In the same manner, it can be shown that the religion of the ancient Chinese was purely the ancestor-worship. The Chinese have always believed in the spirits of their departed ancestors and relatives. They invoke them seeking their help in time of need, and pray to them for welfare and prosperity. Even today the departed ancestors in China are honoured with titles and praises for the meritorious acts performed by their descendants.

The ancient Parsees believed in the spirits of their dead forefathers and called them 'fravashis' or fathers. According to their belief, the spirits of the righteous were raised to the rank of the angels, the arch-angels and the gods. The Parsees used to invoke them, praise them, pray to them, and ask help and blessings of them. They used to offer them food and other offerings in memory of the 'fravashis' or fathers. Thus we see that the ancestor-worship or the ancient form of spiritualism gave foundation to the religion of the Parsees as well as of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, and Chinese.

In Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism traces of ancestor-worship have been discovered by modern scholars and higher critics of the scriptures. In the 28th chapter of the first Samuel in the Old Testament, we read that Saul went to consult with the witch of Endor who had familiar spirits. At the request of Saul, the witch invoked the spirit of Samuel who appeared and gave him good counsels. The witches and wizards of the Old Testament were nothing more than the mediums of modern spiritualism. If the spiritualistic mediums of the present day had lived about four centuries ago, they would have been condemned by the Church as witches and perhaps would have been hanged or burned at the stake.

The Hebrew word 'Elohim', which has often been translated as God in the English Bible, was applied also to disembodied spirits. It is said that the witch of Endor saw Elohim ascending out of the earth; here Elohim was used in the sense of disembodied spirit of the dead. It was a kind of materialization of the departed spirits, such as is to be seen in the seances

today. Do we not find a clear trace of the ancestor-worship in Judaism when we read.

‘And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did obeisance.’¹

The saint-worship among the Roman Catholics is another form of the ancestor-worship or a remnant of ancient spiritualism. If we go to Rome or to any other part of Italy, we see the status of canonized saints over their tombs which are decorated with flowers and lighted candles, and the spirits of those saints are invoked with prayers and offerings. In fact, the beginning of the altars of churches and temples can be traced back to the graves of the ancestors who lived righteous lives.² The offerings and the sacrifices in the name of God likewise originated in the belief that the departed ancestors had hunger and thirst just as they had when they were in flesh and blood. That which was at first the food and drink for the dead, developed into the form of sacrifices. The Holy Communion, the offering of thanks, and the Eucharist of the Christians are only the relics of the ceremonies connected with the ancestor-worship or the spirit-worship of the primitive people. Similar ceremonies still prevail among the heathen races who have never heard of Christ or of his crucifixion. They were the spontaneous expressions of the human minds which revered and honoured the memory of their departed ancestors. The chants and the praises which were used by the primitive people to describe virtues and heroic qualities and the deeds of their dead ancestors, have gradually taken the forms of the hymns of praise which are sung in churches and temples. Both Christ and Mohammad had believed in the departed spirits, and saw the angels ascending and descending over their heads, and received revelations through those who were but the spirits of the righteous.

In India, from the very ancient times the belief in departed spirits has played an important part in shaping the religious ideals of the Hindus. This belief found expression in the oldest scriptural writings of the vedic period. As early as the time of the Rig Veda which goes back at least five thousand years before the birth of Christ, the idea was very common and

¹ *Samuel I*, Ch. XXVIII, 14.

² *Vide Notes.*

there we read many hymns with invocations, addressed to the Pitris, or the departed Fathers.³ They were invoked, praised, and invited to accept the offerings made to them at the time of the 'Shraddha'. The Sanskrit word 'Shraddha' means anything done in the memory of the departed ancestors. It includes the prayers, the praises, and the offerings. One of the daily duties of the Hindu house-holders is to spend a few minutes in thinking of their departed ancestors and in doing some good works in their name. They will feed the poor and the hungry, or give clothes to the needy, or make pilgrimages in the name of their dead relatives. The Hindu belief is that the fruits of such good works, when performed in the name of the departed spirits, will go to them and help them in their onward progress. All virtuous deeds, performed by the relatives and friends of the departed ones in the name of their ancestors, will surely bring good results to them.

According to the religion of Vedanta, the souls of the ordinary mortals remain earth-bound for some time after their death, and expect help from their relatives and friends who are left behind. The good thoughts and the good deeds of the living help the departed spirits in obtaining release from the earth-bound condition, and thus they are enabled to rise higher and enter into the realm of the Pitris, Manes, or Fathers, in order to reap the fruits of the virtuous deeds, done either by themselves, or performed for them or in their name by their descendants, friends, and relatives.

The realm of the ancestors is called the Pitriloka,⁴ where

³ In the 10th Mandala of the Rîg Veda, there are 72 *mantras* between the 14th and 18th *Suktas*. Those *mantras* or hymns have been addressed to Pitriloka, Yama, Pitriloka-Devata, Agni, Sarayu, Pusia ; Sarasvati, Water ; Soma, Mṛityu, Dhata and Tastha in connection with the burial, cremation and partial cremation. In the 2nd hymn of the 16th *Sukta* we find also the seed of reincarnation of the soul.

श्रुतं यदा कसि जातवेदोऽथेनेनं परिदत्तात् पितृभ्यः ।

यदा गच्छत्यसुनीतिमेतामथा देवानां वशनीर्भवति ॥

That is, "O Agni, when you will burn his body satisfactorily, send him then to the inhabitants of the *pitriloka*. When he will be born again (*yada gacchatyasunitimetamatha*), he will be devoted to the *devatas*". This hymn proves also the existence of the soul in the world beyond death.

⁴ We give here the following references of the *pitriloka* from the Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads and others.

(1) "Pitaro Yamarajye" etc.—*Vajasaneyi-samhita* (Madhyandina-sakha) 19.45, *Matrayani-samhita*, 3.11.10, 156.11, *Kathaka-samhita*, 38.2 ;

the departed spirits of the ancestors, it is believed, enjoy the heavenly life and the celestial pleasures. This realm is ruled by the first of the mortals, who, through good works, raised himself to that state of consciousness. He is called in Sanskrit 'Yama'. Those, who have read the *Katha Upanishad* and Sir Edwin Arnold's *Secret of Death*, are familiar with this word, Yama, the Ruler of the realm of the Pitris or Manes or Fathers, who bestow all comforts and happiness, according to the desires of those who reach that plane of existence. The realm of the Fathers or the ancestors corresponds to the heaven of the modern spiritualists. To go there is the highest ideal of the ancient ancestor-worship and also of modern spiritualism. Spiritualism, whether ancient or modern, cannot describe any stage beyond the realm of the Fathers. The religion which the modern spiritualists preach and claim as the true religion, does not take us further than this belief that we shall meet our departed ancestors, friends, and relatives, and rejoice in their company after death, and enjoy all the pleasures of life. The same ideal has been maintained by the ancestor-worshippers of all countries. The heaven of the ancestor-worshippers of ancient times is the heaven of modern spiritualists. It is the realm of the Fathers. Many people may doubt its existence, but there is no reason for such doubts. Spiritualism leads human minds only a step beyond the grave in the world of phenomena, and opens the way to the belief in this realm of the departed spirits. Where the ideal of the ancestor-worship or the heaven of modern spiritualism ends, there is the beginning of the higher religion of Vedanta which points out the path that directs the individual souls to the eternal Truth

Taittiriya-brahmana, 2 6 34, *Apastamba-shrauta-sutra* 1 9 12, *Sankhyan-grhya-sutra*, 5 9 4;

(2) "Pitrisadanam tva lokam avastrinami" etc—*Maitrayani-samhita*, 1 2 11; 20 14, 1 2.14, 23 11; *Kathaka-samhita*, 2 12, 3.3, 25 10; 26 5; *Manava-shrauta-sutra*, 1 8 2 9,

(3) "Pitrisadane tava loka a sadayami" etc—*Atharva-veda-samhita*, 18 4 67,

(4) "Pitrim lokam api gacchantu ye mrityah" etc—*Atharva-veda-samhita*, 12 2 45; Vide also AV, 18 3.73, 12 2 9, 3 29 4, RV., 10.2 7; 10, 15.1-4, 10 16 1-14, 10.17 3 9

(5) "Pitrilokam gamayan jatavedah" etc—*Atharva-veda-samhita*, 18.4 64;

(6) "Pitrilokat patim yatih" etc—AV, 14 2 52;

(7) "Pitrim imani lokam" etc—*Asvalayana-grhya-sutra*, 47 11. Vide also *Sankhyayana-grhya-sutra*, 4 10 5

which is beyond all phenomena, beyond heaven, and above the realm of the Fathers, and even far beyond the reach of the angels, or the bright spirits, or the gods.

After ages of investigations into the nature of life that one can possibly lead in the *Pitrloka*. The vedantic sages and seers of Truth have discovered that the heaven of the Fathers is not the highest abode of the eternal Truth, but it is phenomenal and is subject to the laws which govern the phenomenal universe. They say that the inhabitants thereof are bound by the law of *karma*, or by the laws of cause and effect or of action, and reaction, and their stay on that plane is temporary although it may last for thousands of years. The vedantic seers of Truth say that the ancestors or the Fathers do not know the highest Truth, or the absolute Reality of the universe, and being bound by desires, they cannot reach the plane of Divinity, and, consequently, they cannot teach the divine Truth which they do not know themselves.

These ancient seers of the absolute Truth have realized through their own experience that the inhabitants of the spirit world, or of the heaven of the ancestors, or the realm of the *Pitris*, do not and cannot know the highest Truth on the plane of Divinity, and therefore, they cannot teach others, and so they have warned their disciples, followers, and seekers after Truth in general not to waste their time and energy in seeking spiritual help from those departed spirits who have no knowledge of truths that exist beyond the world of psychic phenomena and who do not possess the power of helping any seeker after divine realization.

Disregarding such wise warnings, the American spiritualists of modern times have been spending their time and energy and wasting their money in the vain hope of gaining the favour of those departed spirits, of learning the mysteries of life and death from them, and of solving the problems which trouble most human minds. The modern spiritualists claim to establish the foundation of a true religion upon the imperfect knowledge, derived from the communications of the foolish, deceitful, idiotic, and ignorant earth-bound spirits who control the mediums and pretend to know everything, regarding the realms beyond death. The students of Vedanta often wonder how sensible men and women and sit in public seances night after night

and listen with their great admiration and rapturous attention to the senseless prattle of ignorant spirits who are supposed to control the weak minds of the mediums.

Having spent some time with the mediums of all kinds that exist in America, I wish to say a few words regarding my experience. I have been invited by the spiritualists to speak for them and to attend their seances. I had accepted their invitations with great pleasure in order to make some investigations for my own satisfaction. I have seen many materialized spirits and have spoken with them. I have had long conversations with some who spoke through tin trumpets and have asked them many questions, but I have not found a single spirit in any seance and not a single medium who could answer my questions satisfactorily. I have asked them about the life after death, the origin of the soul, the true nature of the soul, its relation to the universal Spirit, etc., but such questions, however, have never been answered by them; on the contrary, on many occasions they have confessed their ignorance and have said: 'We do not know; you know better than we can tell you'. Some spirits have often referred to me for my approval of their answers to the questions which they were asked by other sitters. A few years ago, I was amused to hear from a materializing spirit in a public seance: 'Oh, here is a thinking-box; what can we say before him?' This exclamation came from an American Indian spirit. I was sitting next to the husband of the medium and as he was a friend of mine, I asked him the meaning of such a remark. He said: 'She refers to you'. I inquired: 'Why?' He replied 'She thinks you are very wise, and she cannot show her power.' I am sorry to say that the seance was not successful that evening.

On another occasion, I had a long talk with a spirit, and asked her many questions regarding the mode of living in the spirit world, and her answers to my questions were perfectly idiotic. The spirit said that she went to schools and studied books. I asked: 'What books do you read? Can you mention the name of my book you read?' 'No', she said, 'I do not know the names.'

Sometimes, however, I have noticed that telepathically my own thoughts and my own ideas and very expressions were reproduced as perfectly as if I was answering my own question.

I was also pleased to hear the remarks which the spiritualistic mediums made after hearing my discourse on *Reincarnation*. Some of them congratulated me and said: 'My spirit-guides have taught me exactly what you have explained.' But other mediums did not like the idea of reincarnation at all, because they had not learned it from their spirit-controls.

Supposing all the phenomena of spiritism to be true and genuine, but what have the spiritualists gained by these communications outside of the satisfaction of their idle curiosity? Have they learned any of the higher truths? Have they understood any of the laws that govern the spiritual nature of man? Have they known why human beings come to this earth and why they go away suddenly? I have asked many of the mediums as well as their spirit-guides, and have found that they do not know anything regarding the origin of the soul. Their answers are always based upon the dogmas of Christian theology, which they learned in their childhood in Sunday schools. They say: 'God creates the soul at the time of birth, and the soul continues to exist for ever.' If one asks: 'How do you know that the soul did not exist before the birth of the body?' They do not answer.

Although many of the spirit manifestations and spirit communications have been exposed as fraudulent and many of them can be explained by telepathy and thought-transference, still there are some genuine phenomena which cannot be explained by any other theory than that of the communication of the disembodied spirits. On many occasions, the audience is fooled by the spirits. Some of whom are neither wise nor truthful. In some cases, they take the appearance of some other spirits and deceive the sitters. The poor and innocent mediums may not know that such tricks are played upon them by their dishonest spirit-guides, so they are not to be held responsible for the fraud in many cases. But the spirits are to be blamed. Therefore how can we expect to learn the absolute Truth from these spiritualists whose controls and guides themselves are ignorant, deceitful, and not wiser than the mediums? Vain is the hope of those spiritualists who expect to know the absolute Truth through communications from the earth-bound spirits. In India, the seekers after the absolute Truth do not go to any spiritualistic medium to obtain the knowledge of the soul or of

God, because they are taught from their childhood that the spirits who do communicate with the ordinary mortals through mediums, are ignorant and earth-bound. They need our help more than they can help us in any way.

These seekers after truth do not seek wisdom from the Fathers, or the departed ancestors, because they know that the inhabitants of the spirit-world or heaven, or the Pitrloka, the realm of the Fathers, are not perfect, but that they go there being bound by desires to enjoy the fruits of their good works for sometime, and at the expiration of that period, are forced to come down from that plane to the world,⁵ that eventually they are bound to reincarnate as the human beings in order to fulfil other human desires which are latent in them and to reap such results of works as are to be obtained on the human plane alone. No individual, remaining in the plane of human desires, can escape this wheel of birth and rebirth which covers all the stages between the highest heaven on one side and the earthly existence on the other. So long as desires remain in us, we are bound to go through the changeful conditions and existences, and meet such environments as are subject to changes. Those who enter into the heaven of the modern spiritualists, are similarly subject to the law of *karma*, or that of cause and sequence. Being bound by that law, they must remain there

⁵ Vadarayana in his *Brahmasutra* (3.1.1-27) has mentioned how the soul, accompanied by the *mukhya-prana* (chief vital air or spirit), the sense-organs and the mind and taking with itself nescience (*avidya*), moral good or ill-*karma*, and the impressions left by its precious existence, leaves its body (after death) and obtains a new body. In the 3.1.8 *sutra*, he says particularly:

कृतात्ययेऽनुशयवान् दृष्टस्मृतिभ्यां यथेतमनेवंच ।

Acharya Sankara in his commentary explains it, "the souls of those who perform sacrifices and the like, rise on the road, leading through smoke and so on, to the sphere of the moon, and when they have done with enjoyment (of the fruits of their works), again descend, having dwelt there "*yavatsampatam* * *punaravartante yathetam*,"—they return again that way as they came" etc. Again in connection with the *sutra*—

सामाख्यापत्तिरूपतेः (३।१।२२)

Sankara has explained the method of descending of the souls, after quoting the text of the *Upanishad* "They return again by the way they came, to the ether, from the ether to the air. Then the sacrificer, having become air he becomes smoke, having become smoke he becomes mist, having become mist he becomes a cloud, having become a cloud he rains down". Vide also Max Muller: *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, pp 175-180.

until they have reaped the results of their good deeds and good thoughts. They will then come down to this phenomenal earth and will be reincarnated again as human beings, in order to satisfy their human desires and human tendencies on the human plane. Cycle after cycle the individual souls remanifest themselves on different planes of existence, in accordance with their thoughts, desires, and works. They may go to the heaven of the Pitris, or the ancestors, or any other higher realm of the spirits.

Having understood this grand law of *karma*, the Vedanta philosophers and the seekers after absolute Truth in India searched for that subtle path, by which the individual soul can escape the wheel of rebirth in this world and transcend all laws and all stages of the phenomenal universe from the heaven of the spiritualists and the ancestor-worshippers up to the highest realm of the *Devas*, or the gods. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Lord says:

‘Even the inhabitants of the highest heavens are subject to the laws of rebirth and reincarnation. He alone is free from birth and rebirth and transcends all phenomena, who, after knowing the absolute Truth and after realizing the supreme Spirit, becomes one with the Divinity.’⁶

The path which leads to the realization of the absolute Truth, or to the abode of the eternal and unchangeable Reality of the universe, is different from that which leads to the realm of the fathers, or to the heaven of the spiritualists or the dualistic religions. The entrance into the heaven of the ancestor-worshippers depends upon good and righteous works. It comes as the effect of good thoughts and good deeds. But the performance of good deeds and good thoughts cannot be produced as their result of the attainment of Godconsciousness, or as the Divine realization or absolute Truth, which is the highest ideal of all religions. No amount of good thoughts and deeds can produce as their effect which is beyond thoughts and mind, and, consequently, beyond the reach of their effects, because the Divine realization is not within the realm of the psychic phenomena, nor can it be reached by mind, intellect, and the sense powers. The path which leads the individual

⁶ *Bhagavad Gita*, VIII, 19

soul to the realization of the Absolute, is neither through the righteous works, nor through the belief in the departed spirits, nor by the worship of the spirits of the ancestors, but through the Self-knowledge or the knowledge of the relation which the individual soul bears to the universal Spirit. That path is called in Vedanta, the *devayana*, the divine path or the path which leads to Divinity.⁷ The travellers on this path are those who are the most sincere and earnest seekers after the Absolute. They do not care for the phenomena, whether physical or psychic, whose souls soar high above the clouds of desires that cover the light of the spiritual sun in the ordinary mortals; but whose highest aim, loftiest aspiration and deepest longing of the soul are to realize that unchangeable Truth which is beyond mind and intellect and which the fathers in the heavens of the spiritualists cannot reach. We must go there in order to find the correct solution of all the problems concerning life and death. True religion does not depend upon any of the psychical phenomena that are to be seen in the seances, nor is it based upon the ancestor-worship. Therefore the religion of Vedanta tells us not to seek the Divine wisdom from the departed spirits, and not to waste our time and energy by going after them, because the result will not be successful. The spiritualists who seek the highest wisdom from the communications with the departed spirits, are deluded, and they do not know the limitations of those earth-bound souls.

Such earth-bound souls may take the form of a great wise man or a sage and may appear in a seance and pretend to give the highest truths, but the sensible persons will easily find out how deceitful some of them are. We must be very careful in

⁷ *Chandogya Upanishad*, 5 10 3-4; and *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 6.2.15. In the 18th verse of the *Isha Upanishad* we find also "*Agne naya-supathā raye asmana*" etc. The word *supathā* means the *devayana* which is opposed to *dakshina-marga* of the workers (*karmis*), who perform sacrifices with the desire of going to heaven or to some other higher *lokas*. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (8 24-25), there is also mention of the paths, *uttarayana* and *dakshinayana*.

अग्निर्ज्योतिरहः शुक्रः षण्मासा उत्तरायणम् ।

तत्र प्रयाता गच्छन्ति ब्रह्म ब्रह्मविदो जनाः ॥

धूमो रात्रिस्तथा कृष्णः षण्मासा दक्षिणायम् ।

तत्र चान्द्रमसं ज्योतिर्गौरी प्राप्य निवर्तते ॥

dealing with the spirits. I have seen people who, after investigating spiritualism and seeing all these phenomena, have lost all faith, and have become atheistic in their ideas. The modern spiritualists are like the babies in this line of thought. The seekers after the absolute Truth in India have searched, and gained experience for thousands of years in studying the characters of the earth-bound and also of the higher spirits. The Hindus do not allow anyone to become mediumistic. They say that those who go into that condition, are committing a great psychological crime, by making their own minds and bodies which they have got for their own development, subject to the influences of other spirits for the fulfilment of their desires.

We know that the mediums get more or less moral and physical wrecks in the end. If spiritulism can enlighten the minds of the peoples they claim, why do we see that many of these mediums are ignorant and idiotic? They do not understand the moral and spiritual laws that govern our souls. They have lost the power of self-control. They cannot control the trance-like condition, when their animation is suspended, and their mind, brain and the whole body are at the mercy of another power outside of themselves.

The will-power of the mediums is generally weak. Their vital energy, life-force and intellectual powers are used by other spirits which have control over them. Once I asked a good materializing medium, how she felt after coming out of the mediumistic condition? She replied: 'I feel as though there were nothing in me, as if all vitality and life had been taken out of me. I cannot think or do anything for sometime'. Is not this a pitiable condition? It is for this reason in India, the earth-bound souls who are trying to get possession of the weak-minded mortals, are delighted to find anyone who seeks their help.

The genuine phenomena of spiritism may do some good in the way of satisfying the curiosity of certain people, or of bringing the assurance that there is a life after death. They may foretell some petty trivial events in connection with our business or daily life, but they cannot bring to us the highest wisdom and happiness which come to the soul through Divine communion. These spirits are not the angels, as the spiritualists

claim, but they are, in reality, the earth-bound spirits. The modern spiritualism may encourage the hope of meeting the departed spirits of our friends and relatives, and may bring consolation in the minds of those who doubt their existence, but it cannot give us the realization of the absolute Truth, or the attainment of Godconsciousness. It cannot lift us above the realm of the fathers or the ancestors who are dwelling in the *pitriloka*. The aim of religion of Vedanta, on the contrary, is to make the individual soul realize its own true nature and to bring its reunion with the universal spirit and to transform it into the divine Being which transcends all the limitations of time and space and all the laws which bind us to this earthly plane. The aim of the religion of Vedanta is to make us realize the eternal Truth in this life and to be perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect.

The attainment of Godconsciousness is the highest ideal of Vedanta. It shows the way, by which we can reach the ultimate goal of all religions, manifest Divinity in the deeds on actions of our daily life, and becoming free from selfishness and independent of physical and mental conditions as to how we may live as a living God. For this reason, it is said in Vedanta:

'You may read the scriptures, or repeat scriptural passages day after day; you may offer sacrifices, prayers and invocations to the spirits or angels for help, or worship the spirits of departed ancestors for wisdom and knowledge; but so long as you do not realize the true nature of your Self, so long as you do not feel that reunion of the individual soul with the universal Spirit, you shall not attain to spiritual freedom and perfection.'⁸

° कुरुते गङ्गासागरगमनं

व्रतपरिपालनं अथवा दानम् ।

ज्ञानविहीने सर्वमनेन

मुक्तिर्न भवति जन्मशतेन ॥

CHAPTER XII

SPIRITUALISM AND ANCESTOR-WORSHIP

Many scholars maintain that the ancestor-worship was the beginning of all great religions that claim a supernatural origin. The ancestor-worship, as we all know, means a kind of belief in the spirits of the departed ones and in the supernatural powers which they possess and also constant remembrance of those spirits in our minds. Resignation of the will under their direction will rouse the sympathy and kind feelings for those who are left behind them. It has been said before that among the ancient religions of the world we find traces of this ancestor-worship among the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Chinese and Hindus and other races that inhabit different parts of the world¹. Among the ancient Egyptians we find a belief similar to that of the modern spiritualists. They believed that within the body of the human beings there was a kind of being, similar in form to human beings with similar hands, feet, and all other parts of the body, and it was something like the 'double' of the physical man. This counterpart or 'double' went out of the body and lived, and, according to their belief, the life of this double or counterpart, depended upon the physical form of the human beings.

If any part of this physical form was injured, the similar part of the double or counterpart would also be injured. It is for this reason the Egyptians cared so much for the dead bodies of their ancestors, and preserved them by making them into mummies. The pyramids were built for the purpose of preserving the mummies or the dead bodies². The Egyptians had the

¹ There was a common belief among the tribes of the Bantu stock of Africa, among the Zulus the Thonga and other Caffre tribes of South Africa, the Ngoni of British Central Africa, the Abondel, the Masai, the Suk, the Nandi, the Akikuyu of German and British East Africa, the Dinkas of the Upper Nile, the Betsileo and other tribes of Madagascar, the Iban or Sea Dyakas of Borneo, and even among the Romans and Greeks that "the dead come to life and revisit their old homes in the shape of serpents" and other animal forms—Vide J. G. Frazer *The Golden Bough* (3rd ed.), pt. IV, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Vol. I, pp. 82-107.

² A. W. Benn mentions in this connection: "What we have now to examine is the general condition of popular belief, as evinced by the

belief that so long as these physical forms would remain perfect, this double would remain perfect and intact. The ancient Babylonians had a belief a little different from that of the Egyptians. They preserved the dead bodies, embalmed them, and built tombs over them, putting flowers, wreaths and flags over the graves. This is practised in these days in Europe and America, and is a remnant of the ancestor-worship of the Babylonians. The main religion of the Chinese is the ancestor-worship. The Parsees of the ancient days believed also in the departed spirits and called them the *fravashis*, or the fathers. They invoked these spirits, prayed to them, and asked help and blessings of them.

According to the belief of the Parsees, the spirits of the righteous people had been raised to the ranks of the arch-angels and the guardian angels. The Parsees used to offer food and sacrifices in the names of the departed fathers and called upon them whenever they wished anything of a supernatural nature. Thus we see that this ancestor-worship gave a foundation to the religions of the Parsees as well as to the Babylonians, the

character of the funeral monuments, erected in the time of the empire. Our authorities are agreed in stating that the majority of these bear witness to a widespread and ever-growing faith in immortality, sometimes conveyed under the form of inscriptions, sometimes under that of figured reliefs, sometimes more naively signified by articles placed in the tomb for use in another world. 'I am waiting for my husband,' is the inscription placed over his dead wife by one who was, like her, an enfranchised slave. Elsewhere a widow 'commends her departed husband to the gods of the underworld, and prays that they will allow his spirit to revisit her in the hours of the night.' 'In death thou art not dead,' are the words deciphered on one mouldering stone. 'No', says a father to a son whom he had lost in Numidia, 'thou hast not gone down to the abode of the Manes but risen to the stars of heaven'. At Doxato, near Philippi in Macedonia, a mother has graven on the tomb of her child 'We are crushed by a cruel blow, but thou hast renewed thy being and art dwelling in the Elysian fields'. This conception of the future world as a heavenly and happy abode where human souls are received into the society of the gods, recurred with especial frequency in the Greek epitaphs, but is also met with in Latin-worship countries'.

'Originally, peculiar to Greece, where it still exists under a slightly altered form, this superstition penetrated into the West at a comparatively early period. Thus in the tombs of Campania alone many hundred skeletons have been found with bronze coins in their mouths, placed there to pay them passage across the Styx, and explorations at present show that this custom reaches back to the middle of the fourth century B.C. We also learn from Lucian that, in his time, the old animistic beliefs were other appurtenances of deceased persons along with their bodies, under the idea that the owners required them for use in the other world; and it is so much deposits that our museums of classical antiquity owe the greater part of their contents.—Vide *The Greek Philosophers* (1914), pp 503-504.

Chinese and the Egyptians. In Judaism and Mohammedanism, traces of this worship are discovered by modern scholars.

The Hebrew word 'elohim', which is translated as God, is used with the meaning of departed spirit. The Witch of Endor saw 'elohim' come out of the earth. Do we not find a trace of the ancestor-worship when we read in the Samuel:

'And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did obeisance ?'³

The sacrifices that are made in the name of God, originated from the belief that the departed spirits have hunger and thirst just as much as when they were in flesh and blood. This offering of food and drink gradually developed into sacrifices. The communion and the offering of thanks and the Eucharist of the Christians are only the relics of the ceremonies in connection with the ancestor-worship. The chants and praises that were offered by the primitive people to commemorate their ancestors and to describe the heroic deeds and virtues of the departed spirits, gradually developed into the hymns of praise which we have today⁴.

Both Christ and Mohammad believed in the departed spirits and the angels, good and evil. They received revelations through these angels who were righteous and holy. Amongst the Mohammedans we find that they erect mosques and tombs. These graves are regarded as the holy places, and are visited by pilgrims from time to time. In India, this belief in the departed spirits played an important part in shaping the

³ Vide *Samuel I*, Ch XXVIII, 14.

Rev A W. Oxford also says 'Since we find the graves of the ancestors of Israel situated on mountains (Numb XX, 28, Josh. XXIV, 30) or connected with places where there stood either a tree or a stone (Gen. XXIII, 17; XXXV, 8-20, Numb XX, 1; Josh XXIV, 32), it is impossible to avoid the conclusion to which we are led by many other considerations that the pre-Jehovistic worship was that of ancestors'—*Religious Systems of the World* (1901), pp 56-57

He further mentions 'From the worship of holy stones and trees arose the *messeba*, or holy pillars, and the *aschera*, or holy poles 4 4. The *teraphim*, used apparently, like the ephod, as oracles (Ezek XXI, 21, Hos III, 4), may have been images of ancestors as they were of the size and shape of a man (Sam. XIX, 13). The theory that they were images of ancestors is supported by Gdn. XXXI, 19'—*Ibid*, pp. 56-57.

⁴ Prof Sayce similarly found ancestor-worship and Shamanism (a low form of ghost propitiation) at the root of the religion of the ancient Accadians. Similar customs have been traced among the Greeks and Amazulu, among the Hebrews and the Nicaraguans, among ancient English people (Britains), Digger Indians, and the primitive people of the Andaman Islands.—Vide Menzies' *History of Religion*, pp 111-113.

religious ideals of the Hindus; and that belief found its expression in the most ancient scriptural writings. In the Vedas, we read that these spirits of the fathers were invited to accept the offerings of food and drink at the time of the *shraddha* ceremony⁵. When a person dies after a fortnight or a month, all the relatives gather to do good works, and perform sacrifices in the name of that departed spirit. They feed the poor, and give wealth and make charity, etc. The word *shraddha* means doing good in the memory of some one. One of the daily duties of the Hindu householder is to spend a few minutes in thinking of the departed ancestors and in doing certain good acts in their name, giving something to the poor and feeding the hungry or giving clothes to the needy. The Hindus believe that these good acts, when done in the name of the departed spirits, are a help to the spirits in their onward progress.

According to the Hindu belief, every mortal after death remains earth-bound for sometime, and those spirits who are in that condition, seek help of the living ones, the descendants, relatives and friends to free them from the earth-bound condition. The good deeds and the good thoughts, performed in the memory of the departed ones, help them, giving them chances of getting out of that earth-bound condition, and gradually they rise in the realm of the fathers where they stay and reap the results of the good works, either done by themselves or performed in their name by the descendants, friends and relatives. The realm of the fathers was discovered by the first mortal who by good works succeeded in finding the path to that realm, and afterwards became the ruling god of those who came later. This is called the *pitrloka*. Those who have read the *Katha* and other *Upanishads*, are familiar with this name. This realm extended all the comforts of life to those who reached there. This realm of the fathers is heaven, the ideal place of the ancestor-worshippers as well as heaven of the modern spiritualists, even though they do not call it by that name.

The religion of the spiritualists, whether ancient or modern, cannot describe that state, in which their ancestors live. That religion cannot take us beyond that realm and cannot give

⁵ Vide Notes

us anything beyond the belief that after our death, we shall meet our departed friends and live and rejoice with them for ever and enjoy happiness in that heavenly condition. But this heaven of the ancestor-worshippers and also of the modern spiritualists is not the highest heaven. Where the heaven of the ancestor-worshippers and modern spiritualists ends, there begins the foundation of the true religion which leads to the abode of the eternal Truth which is beyond all laws, all psychic conditions, all pleasures, and all comforts of life.

After ages of investigation the Hindu sages and the seers of Truth have discovered that this realm of the fathers is not the eternal abode of Truth. It is phenomenal, and the inhabitants of this realm are not free, but bound by desires for pleasures and comforts of life. They are subject to the law of *karma*, of cause and effect, of action and reaction, and their stay on this plane is temporary although it may last for thousands of years. They went deeper than the modern spiritualists, and by investigating the conditions of life in that realm, they saw what conditions are connected with their stay in that realm.

The ancient seers amongst the Hindus saw that these fathers cannot get beyond that realm, cannot rise on the plane of Divinity, do not understand the divine Truth, and, consequently, cannot be the teachers of divine Truth. Having realized this the seers of Truth amongst the Hindus warned their disciples, followers, and seekers after Truth in general not to waste their energies and time in asking help of those who cannot know truths beyond the psychic plane and who are within the phenomenal world and cannot rise on the plane of Divinity.

Disregarding the remarks and the warnings of those ancient seers of Truth, modern spiritualists seek wisdom and knowledge of Divine things from the disembodied spirits, and try their best to gain favour of the departed ones, with the hope that they will learn something about God and the true nature of the soul and the relation of the individual soul to the universal spirit. They try to lay the foundation of true religion, depending entirely upon knowledge, gathered from the communications of some foolish, idiotic and earth-bound spirits of the dead. The Hindus wonder how sensible persons can sit night after night in the public seances, and listen to the senseless prattle

of those ignorant spirits who do not know anything, and cannot understand or teach us anything about the higher truths of our life.

As I have already said before that having spent some time with the mediums of all kinds that exist in America, I have not met a single medium or departed spirit who could answer satisfactorily any of the questions which I asked them regarding the life after death, or regarding the true nature of the individual soul or its relation to the universal Spirit. On the contrary, I heard many spirits say, when asked these question: 'You yourself can answer these questions better than we can'. Sometimes I heard many spirits refer to me, when some questions were asked by other sitters. I was amused to hear some spirit say in a materializing seance last summer, and it was the spirit-control of the medium who appeared and the first thing the spirit offered was this: 'Oh, here is a thinking-box, how can we talk before him?' I did not understand what was meant, and afterwards I found this expression was used in reference to me.

The spirits would come and talk about certain things, but, on some occasions, I noticed that some of the answers were nothing but the reproductions of my thoughts, my ideas, and my familiar expressions, and they were telepathically reproduced as perfectly as though I was answering my own questions. I have already said that, on other occasions, when I was lecturing on the theory of reincarnation, the mediums who came to hear me, spoke their opinions after lecture. Some came, and said to me: 'My guide teaches exactly what you have explained this afternoon'. This guide had taught them reincarnation, but other mediums disliked it very much. They came and said: 'This is a horrible idea'. I heard so many conflicting opinions that I cannot describe them now. Some would say: 'reincarnation is the only solution of life', and other spirits would say differently. If they know everything, why should they not teach it? Why should their opinions be so conflicting? So how can you expect to know the ultimate Truth and reality of the universe and the nature of our true self and its relation to God from these spirits, who are no better than the mediums themselves? As the mediums can be controlled by anyone, so their spirit-controls are simple beings that cannot explain anything of a higher order. I have already said

before that supposing that these spiritualistic seances had been proved to be true, what have the spiritualists learned from these communications beyond a kind of satisfaction of curiosity and beyond the means of earning a livelihood ?

In India, of course, we do not allow our friends to become mediums, rather we think it is a disease. If one becomes mediumistic, it is very hard to get out of that condition. We do not allow public seances, because we have more respect for our ancestors and departed friends, and we do not wish to make money at the expense of these spirits. We would rather die of privations than to bring down those spirits and ask them for help in the way of living and making money. The Hindus, of course, do not care so much for these kind of seekers after truth. They do not go to the spiritualistic mediums and to public seances, because they know that the spirits who do communicate, are ignorant and earth-bound. They rather pray and send good thoughts to them and try to do good acts in their names, so that they would be released from their earth-bound condition.

The wheel of birth and death covers all the stages that exist between the highest heaven of the gods and the plane of the human beings. We are going up and down according to our desires. But having discovered this grand law, the seekers after the absolute Truth searched for that path, by which the individuals may escape this wheel of rebirth or reincarnation and reach that state from which there is no return. They transcend all phenomena and go beyond the realm of the Fathers. It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

'All the realms, beginning with the highest heaven, are phenomenal. Inhabitants, therefore, are subject to the laws of cause and effect, or of action and reaction ; no one is free from those laws. He alone is free who has transcended phenomena, and who, after knowing Truth, has become Truth, and who, realizing the supreme Spirit, has become one with that Spirit.'¹

The path that leads to heaven of the ancestor-worshippers, is called the *pitriyana* i.e. the path of the ancestors, or that of

¹ *The Bhagavad Gita*, Ch. VIII, 16.

the fathers.² But the other path which leads to the realization of Truth is different from this path. The entrance into the heaven depends entirely upon the good thoughts and deeds of the individual, but no amount of good thoughts and deeds can produce that which is beyond all thoughts and is beyond the effects of thoughts and deeds. The path, which leads to the realization of the absolute Truth through the knowledge of the true Self as well as of our relation to the universal Spirit, is called in Sanskrit the *devayana*,³ the divine path. The teachers of this path are those who are most sincere and earnest seekers after truth, who care nothing for phenomena, whether on the physical or psychic plane, and whose souls soar high above the clouds of desires that cover the light of the spirit-sun in ordinary mortals. The most genuine phenomena of the modern spirits may help some in satisfying the curiosity or in bringing a kind of hope of meeting the departed relatives and friends, and a kind of consolation in the hearts of those who are longing to meet their friends and relatives, but beyond that it cannot give the realization of Truth or the attainment of Godconsciousness. The aim of true religion is to bring the individual soul into union with the divine Spirit and to make each soul realize that reunion with the Spirit, making that soul free from the bondages and desires and longings for pleasures and happiness. He who has attained to that realization, is free from ignorance and selfishness and from all other imperfections. He does not go to a spirit for knowledge, but finds all knowledge within himself. He goes to the fountainhead of all knowledge and

² *Pitriyana* is known as the *dhuma-marga*, the dark way of the fathers. In the *Chandogya*, *Brihadaranyaka*, *Katha*, *Prashna* and other *Upanishads*, and in the *Bhagavad Gita*, it has been described nicely. But its seed we find often in hymns of the Rig Veda used with a sacrificial instead of a funeral connotation:

पन्थानमनप्रविशत् पितृयानम् (५।२७)

(RV. V, 2.7), i e., 'O Agni, you are born of earth and sky (*dvava-prithvi*), 4 4. You know the definite path to the *pitriloka*, there, be thou so bright as to illumine that path'

³ Its nucleus we find in Rig Veda, the oldest writings of the Hindus. There we get the hymn.

परं सृज्यो अणु प्रेहि पन्थां यस्ते, स इतरो देवयानात् (१०।६८।१)

(RV: X, 18. 1), i e., 'O Mrityu, go back through a different path: Give up the path that leads to the *devas* ('*archir-marga*') and go through the way other than this (*pitriyana*?).'

draws the water of knowledge from that source. Spirits cannot teach such things, and fathers or ancestors cannot teach him who has realized his oneness with the supreme Being. Such a soul is emancipated and is perfect as the Father of the universe is perfect. He is a living God upon this earth.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SPIRITUALISTIC MEDIUMSHIP

The phenomena of the modern spiritualism have opened a new field for scientific investigation and have inspired earnest men and women of Europe and America with a desire to communicate with their departed friends and relatives. The sceptics and the agnostics, who had no faith in a life after death, have discovered some truths about future life through the genuine communications of the disembodied spirits. They have learnt that death of the body is not the end of the soul-life, but, on the contrary, it is only the threshold of that wonderland where the spirits of the dead continue to exist and enjoy new experience and new pleasure.

Modern spiritualism, as has been said before, has given a deathblow to the hell-fire doctrines and other dogmas of Christian theology as well as to the theory that the souls of men are destined to suffer eternally. It has demonstrated the fact that the spirits of our dead friends and relatives are anxious to inform us that they are comfortable, and that they take great interest in our mundane affairs, and are always ready to direct us in the right path and help us by giving good counsels, and protect us from dangers and misfortunes which often threaten us from distance. These and many other beliefs of similar nature have been maintained by majority of the spiritualists who try to communicate with their departed friends by the developing mediumistic conditions. We are all familiar with the process of developing mediumship. Those who wish to become the mediums, seek the company of other friends who have the same desire. They form themselves into a circle which is known as the *developing circle*. They are told by other mediums, or by their spirit-guides, to select a definite room where they should sit as often as possible at least once a week, but the sittings must be at the same hour and in the same evening of the week. They must begin each sitting promptly at the hour agreed upon, because the spirits are just as busy as we are here constantly discharging our duties and obligations. So they

must make previous appointments and come exactly at the appointed moment to help in the *developing process*. It requires at least five or six sittings to magnetize the atmosphere of the room, and when it is thoroughly magnetized, the *developing process* of mediumship will begin. The sittings must be held in absolute darkness. As a dark room is indispensable to a photographer who wishes to develop a negative, so it is absolutely necessary for one who wishes to be a medium. Here we should remember that mediumship is a negative condition of the mind and the body which can be easily brought about if the sitters do not think of anything, but remain passive and simply hold a receptive attitude as if waiting to get something. The darkness which cuts off physical vision, being the negative pole of light, will naturally help in quieting the sense activities and in bringing them into an absolutely negative state. The soft sweet music is very helpful in the *developing process*, but the sitters themselves should not be the performers of music, because the very efforts to sing requires a positive will and an activity of the mind. Among the sitters those who are of the negative type, should alternate with those of the positive tendency. During this time, the sitters must not think of anything and must not ask any question, but surrender themselves to the will of their invisible controls, and calmly wait for the wonderful results of the developing process.

The best result of mediumship will come to those among the sitters who have been able to surrender absolutely their body, mind and will to the will of the spirit-controls. Gradually the spiritual intelligence will control the will, the volitional powers, and the sensory organism of the medium. This control may be partial or complete. The partial control may be over a certain part of the brain, or any particular organ, or any nerve centre, or any limb or muscle of the body. The partial control can be divided into two general classes: the one, conscious, and the other, unconscious. Each of them can again be subdivided into various other classes in accordance with the phenomena. There are many men and women throughout the country who have some of their mental functions partially under the control of some outside spiritual intelligences, from whom they occasionally receive the messages in the form of certain impressions and of which they are not conscious, but

they do not lose consciousness of their bodies, or of their surroundings. In this conscious impressional mediumship, one may speak or write about things which one does not know or understand. Some of these classes are known as the inspirational speakers and writers. But other class includes those mediums who are not conscious of any outside spiritual control which partially influences their minds. They will speak and write not knowing under whose control they are speaking and writing. There are some who partially become unconscious of their bodies and surroundings at the time of speaking or writing. Partial control of the muscles and the nerve centres leads to a variety of mediumship. Planchette writing, Ouija Board manipulating, automatic writing, clairvoyance, and clairaudience are but some of the different phenomena of muscular and neurotic mediumship. When a spirit controls the muscles of the arms, the medium can move heavy weights. When the optic nerves and the retina are controlled, the medium is able to see pictures or images which are presented to their consciousness by their spirit controls. Similarly, when the nervous organism of ear and the auditory nerves are controlled by the spirit, the mediums can hear such sounds which their controls desire them to hear. In the same manner, the partial control can be made over other senses like smell, taste, or touch. Some are conscious, while others are unconscious of this control. This partial control generally leads to fuller and more complete control, if the sitters continue the *developing process*. Complete control over the mind and the body of the medium is manifested in trance mediumship. Its phenomena are varied and extremely attractive, because this kind of mediumship is of a mysterious character. The medium is generally thrown in a state of deep sleep which resembles the hypnotic sleep. Whatever happens in this state, the medium is unconscious of. The controlling agents have absolute domination over the physical instrument of the medium. The spirits can use the vocal organs of the medium, or any other organ at their will. The will and the volitional powers of the medium are thrown into absolute suspension. Through the body of the medium the spirits can speak or perform any phenomenon without producing any impression upon the conscious being of the medium. Just as a patient in a hypnotic sleep may talk or

walk or eat or dance or do any other act, being under the perfect control of the will-power and the suggestion of the operator, but not remembering any of those acts or words after coming back to normal consciousness, so a trance medium does not remember about what transpired during the state of trance.

There are many such trance mediums among the spiritualists in every country. This trance mediumship may gradually develop into what is called the 'materializing mediumship'. The medium goes into a state of profound trance. The spirit-controls who are experts in the art of materializing, understand the process. They can draw the vital and magnetic energies out of the medium's physical and mental organisms and combine them with the external non-composite elements and attenuated matter (*ectoplasm*)¹ and produce phenomena which can be perceived by the sitters.

Of course, there are many fraudulent materializations which have been exposed again and again in America as also in Europe. But there are also genuine materializations, some of which I have seen with my own eyes and have carefully examined in every possible way which I could use under those circumstances. I have been called to come inside the cabinet of a seance where I felt at least twenty hands on my back, some pulling my collar, sash and some putting hands on my back all at the same time. Then one of the spirits spoke: 'Do you think that the medium has been doing all these?' It was absolutely dark in the cabinet, although there was a dim light shaded by a wooden box in a corner of the room. The same voice then said: 'Put your hands on the medium,' and pulling my hands placed them on the medium. And I felt the stiff limbs of the medium whose hands were tied across tightly with a thick cord seated on a rocking chair in an inclined position in a dead trance. I have held the materialized hand of an American

¹ Sir Arthur Conan Doyle says " * * the witnesses averred that certain people, whom they called 'materializing mediums', had the strange physical gift that they could put forth from their bodies a viscous, gelatinous substance which appeared to differ from every known form of matter, pen that it could solidify, and be used for material purposes, and yet could be re-absorbed, leaving absolutely no trace even upon the clothes which it had traversed in leaving the body

This substance was actually touched by some enterprising investigations, who reported that it was elastic and appeared to be sensitive, as though it was really an organic extrusion from the medium's body "

Indian spirit which melted away in my hand. I have also seen the genuine materialization of a friend of mine who was a native of Calcutta. Very few people understand the process of materialization². There have been many instances in every country where spirits have materialized themselves without the help of any medium.

The vital and magnetic energies of the medium and also of the sitters give the foundation of all the phenomena that take place in a materializing seance. I have talked with the materializing mediums and have asked them how they felt after the seance was over. Invariably they have answered that as if their whole system was empty, as if there was neither life nor vitality left in them, and as if everything was taken out of their mind and body. They cannot think or show any mental activity in their waking state. Is it not the most pitiable condition? Undoubtedly these trance mediums may be called martyrs. Through ignorance they sacrifice their vital energy and will-power upon the altar of the spiritualistic phenomena which ultimately wreck them physically, mentally, and morally, and which stop the growth and evolution of their souls. There are other kinds of materializing trance like painting mediums, trumpet mediums and independent slate-writing mediums, etc. There is still another kind of trance control which was known in olden times as possession or obsession, but which is now recognized as a kind of insanity by the medical practitioners. All these and various other phenomena of mediumship are now admitted and are scientifically demonstrated facts. Various theories have been formulated to explain these phenomena.³

² The materialization process consists of two factors, one of which is the simple spontaneous secretion and formation of this material for the production of forms, images, and living organs

³ * * but whatever may be laws and forces governing materializations, the medium's *psyche* must be brought in as a determining, or at least, as a contributing factor.—B V Schrenck Notzing: *Phenomena of Materialization*, p. 282.

³ "The most important objective performances of the mediumship may be divided into two main groups:

(1) TELEKINETIC PHENOMENA. This class comprises every sort of action upon inanimate objects without contact, such as oscillations, the moving of tables (attraction and repulsion), the levitation of objects (raising and suspension), inflations and motions of a curtain, the mechanics of motion connected with the so-called 'apports', and finally the generation of musical notes and noises at a distance (including raps and other auditory impressions). Also effects upon musical instruments, direct writing in a word, all

Most of the theories outside of the spiritualistic theory however have proved to be insufficient.

The majority of people who have experienced the phenomena manifested through the genuine mediums, cannot deny that the disembodied spirits can communicate with the living mortals, can materialize themselves under certain conditions, and can perform various other phenomena. Now the question arises whether it is beneficial for the mortals to develop mediumship and become mediums and shall we encourage the spiritualists who develop mediumship. We have already seen that mediumship means a receptive or negative state of the mind and the body. If a person be positive, it will be extremely difficult for him or her to become a good medium. Therefore all persons under all circumstances cannot develop mediumship. It is true that there are some who are born mediumistic, or naturally negative, and they can easily throw themselves under the control of any living or disembodied being. Mediumship does not signify any gift or special talent or power from higher spiritual intelligence. Those who think so, are mistaken. Strictly speaking, the word 'development' should not be used in connection with mediumship. Because mediumship is a subjective process of making the mind and the body passive and of surrendering the will and the volitional powers to some external influence which controls the organism of the medium, while 'development' means a gradual unfolding of the positive powers which are latent in the soul by the natural process of evolution. The latter is constructive, while the former is destructive. A medium who appears to be inspired in a semi-trance or full trance condition, does not show any power of his or her own which may be called a gift or inspiration. It is not the power of the medium that makes him or her appear as inspired, but, on the contrary, the will-power and the intellectual

forms of action at a distance no matter whether in their case the manner of production by the mediumistic force was the same.

(2) TELEPLASTIC PHENOMENA This group includes the so-called materialization phenomena of the spiritists, i.e., the production of forms and materials of organic or even inorganic matter, in accordance with definite conception and thought images of the medium, which may have their origin in the memory, or in the psychic under-currents of the medium, in the mentality of one of the witnesses, or (in the spiritistic sense) in forces and intelligences outside the medium."—Notzing: *Phenomena of Materialization*, p. 13

faculties of the medium are suspended, controlled, and kept in abeyance by the controlling spirit who uses the mind and the organism which are passively surrendered to the will of the spirit. It is a gift of the medium of the spirit. Therefore it cannot be called development

A medium who becomes absolutely negative or passive in mind and body, becomes subject to all surrounding influences of the earth-bound spirits who are constantly seeking opportunity to control and make some victims and thus through ignorance a medium opens a psychic field which is dominated by the will of these earth-bound spirits. Many of us have seen scores of spirits who manifest themselves in a single seance and how eager they seem to manifest. If that door is once opened, it will be difficult to prevent those foreign influences from tormenting and eating up the vital energy of the innocent and foolish medium. I know several cases of persons who were at one time mediumistic, but who now suffer terribly from foreign influences and find it hard to overcome them even after constant efforts. Therefore mediumship under no circumstances is a desirable state, nay, it is criminal to surrender one's own will and mind and body to the whims of some earth-bound spirits. Some of the mediums are tempted by the idea that they may develop the power of seeing or hearing at a distance, or things which will happen in future. But they forget that those who have become clairvoyant by the subjective process of mediumship, do not and cannot see or hear whatever they desire to see clairvoyantly or hear clairaudiently. They can see only those things which their controls wish them to see or hear. They are absolutely at the mercy of their controls, just as the hypnotic subjects are at the mercy of their operator's will and suggestion. It is a well-known fact that the mediums gradually lose their power of self-control. They become more and more nervous and this nervousness sometimes culminates into nervous prostration. Brain-diseases of various kinds, the loss of vital energy, the animal magnetism, the continuous insanity, and short life are the evil effects of mediumship.

A high state of mediumship means therefore a degenerated mental condition on the part of the medium. The mediums generally suffer from the loss of memory. They cannot concentrate their minds on one subject for any length of time.

They cannot think or reason consecutively. They lose the strength of their will-power and show irritable disposition. They become vain and egoistic and extremely selfish. They become strong in animal passions and animals desires. Some of the mediums become immoral, dishonest, and untruthful. Statistics have shown that 74 per cent of the professional mediums develop abnormal animal passions. Nearly 60 per cent become hysterical, 85 per cent suffer from nervous irritability, 58 per cent develop fraud and dishonesty, and 95 per cent show lack of moral discrimination and courage, while 70 per cent develop vanity and selfishness.

Such are some of the evil effects of the mediumistic development. Shall we now wonder why the seers of Truth in India so strongly object to one's becoming medium? Shall we wonder why the Vedanta philosophy does not approve of spiritualistic mediumship? The Yogis in India never allow their students to go into the negative or passive condition. They do not deny that we can communicate with the earth-bound spirits or departed ancestors, but they know that to become a medium is a destructive process, and not a constructive one. But they have discovered a system called the Raja Yoga, in which they describe all these wonderful phenomena, which can be obtained scientifically without going into a negative state, or without surrendering the will and mind to any disembodied spirit.

A Yogi develops his power of clairvoyance and clairaudience by a positive method through the practice of concentration and meditation. He can see or hear anything at any time and anywhere. When he attains to the superconscious state, all the bright and intelligent spirits come to serve him and obey his commands. He is not a slave of the discarnate spirits, but he is a master. A true Yogi is a medium of the supreme universal Spirit who is omnipotent and omniscient, while a spiritualistic medium is under the control of an earth-bound spirit who is ignorant and imperfect. No medium has ever gained spiritual wisdom, nor has understood the higher laws which govern our souls through the communication of departed spirits, while a true Yogi, who has reached superconscious state, has attained perfect knowledge and reached Godconsciousness. He is the ideal of nations. He is like Christ, Buddha and

Ramakrishna. He attains to perfection even in this life, while a spiritualistic medium loses all self-control and sacrifices a great opportunity of unfolding the spiritual nature and remains in the darkness of ignorance, and after death joins with their controls and enjoy or suffer, according to their thoughts and deeds. A true Yogi, on the other hand, having reached perfection in this life, transcends the realm of the departed spirits, goes beyond heaven, and attains to omniscience and everlasting bliss.

CHAPTER XIV

THE AUTOMATIC SLATE-WRITING

In the year 1899, I was invited to lecture before Spiritualistic Camp Meeting at Lily Dale near Chattaqua in the State of New York, U.S.A. I spoke on *The Religion of the Hindus* and on *Reincarnation*. The meeting was held in the auditorium the sides of which were open and the seats were occupied by those who were interested in spiritualism. I was the speaker on the anniversary day, when, according to the number of tickets sold at the gate, the attendance was calculated to be seven thousand who came to hear me. Among this vast audience there were mediums of all kinds present at my lecture. After hearing my lectures, many of the mediums said that their spirit-guides taught the same truth which I was teaching, and they extended their courtesy to me by inviting me to their seances. On the 4th of August, 1899, I attended a seance, where I saw automatic typewriting on a typewriter. Everybody gave the names of their departed friends, who might communicate with them. I also gave the name of my departed *gurubhai*, Jogen. In reply I received the name 'Jogen' written with a blue pencil. This aroused my curiosity and I wanted to find out who wrote it.

Next morning, on August 5th at 10 o'clock, I had the invitation to pay a visit to the famous independent slate-writing medium Mr. Keeler. After a few minutes I went in the sitting room and sat near the window in front of Mr. Keeler on a rocking chair. The sunlight was coming through the window. In the space between us was a small square table, covered with a carpet-like cloth. Mr. Keeler brought out two slates both sides of which I sponged with my own hands. Then he wiped them with his handkerchief. Then he asked me to write some questions addressing the spirit with whom I wished to communicate. I asked him whether I could write my questions in the native tongue of my friend. He replied: 'Yes, you can do so'. Then I wrote in Bengali on a slip of paper, folded it, and put it on the top of those two slates, between which Mr. Keeler had already placed a small bit of a slate-pencil about one half

of an inch long. He put his handkerchief loosely around the slates. I held two corners of the slates with both hands, and the medium held the other two corners with his hands. This way the slates were raised above the table in the air between our hands. We sat for a few minutes, and chatted a little, for he said that conversation did not interfere with the writing at all. Mr. Keeler then said: 'I do not know whether your friend will come or not, but I shall do my best'. After a few minutes I asked him whether it was necessary to put my name on the paper. He replied: 'Yes'. He then asked me whether I wrote the name of my friend in English or not. I answered in the negative. He replied: 'Perhaps my spirit guide will not be able to call whom you want, as he cannot read your language.' Hearing this I wrote the following on another slip of paper in English:

'Jogen, are you here? Answer my questions written in Bengali.'

and signed my name—SWAMI ABHEDANANDA. Then I folded this slip of paper and placed it on the top of the slates. Holding the slates again between our hands we talked on various subjects. Mr. Keeler asked me whether my departed friend had ever communicated before. I replied: 'Last evening at Mr. Campbell's seance I asked my friend some questions, but in reply I received a piece of paper on which his name 'Jogen' was written with blue pencil and nothing else. That is all.' Then within a few minutes Mr. Keeler put the slates on the table and wrote with a pencil 'Jogen is here' on one corner of the top slate. He asked me to read it. I read it, and said that the name was correct. Again he held two corners of the double slate with both hands and asked me to hold the other two corners, as stated above. The slates were nearly six inches above the table suspended in the air between our hands, as we sat on either sides of the table with arms stretched. Then I heard the scratching noise of the moving pencil coming from inside of the slates. Mr. Keeler said: 'Do you hear the noise of the pencil?' I said: 'Yes.' It was over in about two seconds. I felt an electric shock in my arms, while the pencil was moving. Mr. Keeler said that he also felt a gentle shock. We opened the slates and found the following words written in legible handwriting:

'I find no one here who can answer the questions of this gentleman,'

signed G. C. Then I asked Mr. Keeler who this G. C. was and he replied: 'G. C. is my spirit guide. His full name is George Cristi'. Then Mr Keeler said: 'Why, your friend is here, he must write'. He wiped the slates, and fixed them again as before. He held the slip of paper with questions in his own hands for a few seconds, and asked me to do the same. I did so. Then we held the slates again as before. Again I felt a gentle electric shock in my arms after a few minutes, and heard the scratching noise of the pencil, coming from inside of the double slates. The noise stopped in a few seconds, and the result was that the slate-writing was in four different languages: Sanskrit, Greek, English and Bengali. Seeing the writing Mr. Keeler was very much surprised, for he could not read or write Sanskrit, Greek and Bengali. Here I must mention that a Lily Dale there was not a single person outside myself who could read or write Sanskrit and Bengali. I was also surprised to see that the handwriting in Bengali resembled the handwriting of my friend 'Jogen' (Swami Yogananda), when he was in his earthly body.

I thanked Mr. Keeler for this extraordinary phenomenon, which I could not explain, and begged of him to give me those slates, as I wanted to find out how it was done by showing the slate-writing to other mediums or spiritualists. Mr. Keeler said that he never had such a slate-writing before. I took the slates and bade him good-bye. Thus ended the seance.

Let me mention here that neither my friend nor myself knew Greek. However, in another seance, I was told by the spirit that my friend brought with him the spirit of a Greek philosopher who wrote the Greek verse. At first I did not believe in the truth of this statement, but when I showed those lines to the Professor of Greek at Columbia University in New York, he said that this verse was a familiar gem of Plato, that every word was correctly written. He then translated the literal meaning of the verse.

In another seance, when I wanted to see Jogen materialized, he replied that he did not like it. But I was surprised to see the spirit of Babu Balaram Basu of 57, Ramkanta Bose Street, Calcutta, fully materialized in the seance of Mrs Moss at Lily Dale in the state of New York. He wore his familiar white

turban on his head, as he used to wear it while in his mortal body. But now it was illuminated as it were with tiny electric bulbs all around the folds of his headdress. My eyes were dazzled to look at this brilliant figure with flowing beard and majestic appearance. He did not speak but answered my questions by nodding his turbaned head. He put his right hand on my head and silently blessed me. At that time I could see the medium Mrs. Moss (who was very stout) sitting unconscious in dead trance on a rocking chair. After blessing me, the whole materialized figure of Balaram Basu melted away in a mistlike white substance ectoplasm and disappeared.¹

I wondered why he did not speak and on questioning I received the answer that he did not speak, because he could not speak before he passed out of his earthly life. This statement corroborated with the fact that before he died Balaram Basu had suffered from double pneumonia and could not speak for over a week.

In another seance I heard Jogen's voice in Bengali when he spoke to me through a tin trumpet. He said to me: 'Do you like this country (America)?', to which I replied: 'Yes.' Then he said: 'I do not like this place, I am going to India to see our Holy Mother'.

Here I must mention that while on earth Jogen served our Holy Mother, the consort of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, with his whole heart and soul. I had also seen in America portrait-painting, painted by the invisible hand of a discarnate spirit done in my presence.

¹ We have also heard from the Swami that he saw the Holy Mother Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Adbhutananda (Latu Maharaj), the Poet Gurish Chandra Ghose and Sister Nivedita in materialized bodies just after the moments of their passing away. In every case, immediately after those psychic visions were over, the Swami received cablegrams from India bearing the sad news of their passing away.

CHAPTER XV

WHAT IS THERE BEYOND THE GRAVE

It has been discussed already what is there beyond the grave is the question that often rises in our minds and we like to know what will happen to us after we pass out of the body at the time of death. When we read different scriptures of the world, we find that the same question was discussed and various answers were received, either through their intellect, through their conception of the world or through revelations. Among the answers which have been handed down to us from time immemorial, we find that in the Old Testament, when this question arose in the mind of Job, he answered in a negative form. He longed for death, thinking that it would end his mental agony. In Psalms we read:

'Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead ? Shall the dead arise and praise thee ?'¹

Again we read:

In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks ?²

'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to this earth ; in that very day his thoughts perish.'³

'The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.'⁴

Solomon spoke boldly as:

'All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked ; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean ; * * * as is the good, so is the sinner.'⁵

'Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart , * * * Live joyfully with the wife for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom,

¹ Psalm 88, Verse 10

² Psalm 6, Verse 5.

³ Psalm 146, Verse 4.

⁴ Psalm 115, Verse 17.

⁵ Ecclesiastes, Ch 9, Verse 2. '

in the grave, wither thou goest.⁶ 'The dead know not anything, neither have they any more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.'⁷

Furthermore we read:

'For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts, even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast.

'All go unto place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.'

'Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth'⁸

There are many such passages that create a great deal of confusion in our minds. Which of these answers is true: whether after entering into the grave we continue to live, or is it true that we perish in the grave?

It has already been discussed that many Christians believe that Jesus the Christ brought eternal life into light. Of course, he did bring eternal life into light among the Jewish tribes who did not believe in the life after death, or, in the truth, that life continues even after we enter into the grave. The Jews from the ancient times down to the time of the Babylonian Captivity did not believe in the existence of a soul which could live separately from the material body. They had an idea that the breath of life came from Jehovah, and at the time of death the same breath of life went back to Jehovah. What happens to the beasts, happens also to the saints and sinners alike. Those passages which I have quoted, referred to that state of belief, that state of mind which existed at that time. But during the Babylonian Captivity, which lasted from 586 to 536 B.C., the Jews came in touch with a highly civilized nation, the Zoroastrians or the Parsees from Persia who believed in the resurrection after death. They believed in a heaven and a hell, in the angels and the arch-angels, and in the last Day of Judgment. All these ideas were unknown to the Jews of ancient times. But some of the Jews accepted that belief, and others denied it.

⁶ Do- Verses 7, 9, 10.

⁷ Do- Verse 5

⁸ Ecclesiastes, Ch III, Verses 19-21.

or the power of Ahriman. That is the time when the last Day of Judgment will come. They also believed in a Messiah. That Messiah will appear in the heavens, in the clouds. His name is Saoshyant, and he will help those righteous souls to enter into Paradise, and enjoy eternal celestial pleasures. But those who are in the darkness of ignorance, will also be forgiven for their sins, and will be allowed to enter into the celestial regions. That was the original belief among the Zoroastrians.

Now comparing the Christian belief with that of the Zoroastrians, we find how similar the Christian belief is to this old Zoroastrian belief of resurrection, the last Day of Judgment, and going into heaven. All these conception existed in Persia long before the time of Christ, and it was noticed and accepted by the Pharisees during that period of Captivity, which lasted from 586 to 536 B.C. So their conception of resurrection was not absolutely dependent upon the resurrection of the body of Christ. These are all historical facts.

Then how can we admit that Christ brought the conception of eternal life into light in its literal sense, when we know that conception of eternal life existed not only among the Zoroastrians, but also among the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Babylonians, Chinese, Hindus, and all other ancient nations like the Romans, Greeks, and the Scandinavians. They all had a belief in an eternal life. As early as 12000 B.C. we find the records among the Egyptians. The Egyptian writers during the period from 12000 to 8000 B.C. recorded that there was a belief in the resurrection of the gross physical body among the ancient Egyptians and they also believed that the soul of the righteous would go into the celestial regions and enjoy all the pleasures that are to be found in those regions. They would have physical forms almost like the physical form we have on earth and that crude idea of resurrection of the gross physical body was afterwards given up when they came to understand the subtle powers and the subtle forces of nature and when they realized that each human body has its double which is made up of finer elements of matter. When their belief became strong in that double which had exactly the same form as the gross physical body had, they gave up the idea of the resurrection of the gross physical body. The writers among old Egyptians who lived in the 5th dynasty, that is, about 3400 years before Christ, empha-

tically declared 'the heaven hath thy soul and the earth hath thy body'. The soul belongs to the heaven and the body belongs to the earth. Since that day there arose the idea of preserving the body, because they had another belief that this double which is similar in shape and form with the gross physical body, continues to remain intact so long as the gross physical body is preserved intact, and that idea gave rise to the thought of mummifying the physical body. That was at the foundation of that practice, and the belief that if any arm or any limb of the physical body was mutilated, then that particular part or limb of the double would also be mutilated. For that reason they tried to keep the whole body intact by that peculiar process of mummifying.

They had also this belief that the souls of the righteous would go into heaven, and would live with the gods and eat and drink with the gods. They would have their physical body, although consisting of finer particles of matter like the etherial body, still those bodies were physical, and they needed food and drink. For that reason, some of the friends and relatives of the departed ones used to keep food and drink in the grave. That practice was continued for sometime. Some of them went so far as to put amulets and charms in the graves, because they had the belief that the departed friends and relatives needed those charms to counteract the evil influences. It was also written that these souls of the righteous ones would go into heavens and walk in the fields of peace, wearing the celestial apparel of white linen and white sandanls. There are canals where they bathe in pleasure. The deepest of pleasures that we have on this earth also exist in the Egyptian heaven.

Then when we read the writings of the Babylonians and the Chaldeans, we find that the Chaldeans also had a belief in resurrection of the corpse and for that reason, they embalm-ed the body and buried it in the grave underground in order to preserve them. That custom has been handed down to the Christians who bury the dead following the same custom of the ancient Chaldeans and the Babylonians. That shows that among the Chaldeans and the Babylonians there was a belief in eternal life. And the ideas that we have today, we did not get from the time of Christ, but they existed centuries before the advent of the illustrious Son of Man.

If we read the Greek and the Roman histories, there we find that the Greeks had a belief in the Elysian Fields that the souls of the righteous would go into the Elysian Fields and there take up the occupations of their life on earth. They would meet their friends, the husband would meet the wife, the parents would meet their children, and they would continue to live there and enjoy all the blessings of life. The Scandinavians had a belief in Valhalla. They were warriors and fighters, and they carried on their fight in the heavens in the presence of Odin. There the brave soldiers who had fallen in the battle-field, would go and fight with their enemies and they would get hurt and wounded, but by the miraculous powers of Odin their wounds would be healed, and they would take their arms again and fight. After fighting in the fields, they would hunt a wild boar and kill it and bring it and roast it and have a great banquet and feast. And this process will continue every day throughout eternity. Now remember that eternity does not mean a thousand years, ten thousand years, a million years, or trillions of years, but it means time without end.

But there are other believers like the American Indians. They have the happy hunting grounds in the heavens. Then we find among the Mohammedans that there is another conception of heaven. They say that the souls of the righteous who follow the commandments of Allah, would go to their Mohammedan heaven where there is plenty of shade, the rivers of pure water running, the rivers of milk, wine, and honey, all running in heavens. And there are maidens (*houris*) who pour wine into the goblets of the pious ones, and the pious ones drink and enjoy the company of those maidens. They have trees, under which they rest and enjoy the taste of the delicious fruits which those trees bear. You know that the Arabs lived in a desert, where there was a great need of water and shade. The Arab people wanted water, and that was their idea of heaven with plenty of shade, delicious fruits, and all the enjoyments that they could imagine on this earth they projected and made a heaven that contained all such delightful things. It is a kind of heaven which is damp and wet and full of water. But I come from a country where the annual rainfall is five hundred forty inches. I would not care to go to a wet heaven.⁹

⁹ Cf. Swami Abhedananda *Path of Realization*, pp. 149-160

So, from these descriptions we learn that each nation and each tribe project their highest ideals of heaven and create one like a dreamland and the conception of heaven is the place where we can enjoy all the pleasures without having any break or sorrow or separation. That is, the souls of each nation and each tribe continue to enjoy these pleasures throughout eternity. Such is their belief. Some people believe that their occupation in heaven will be singing and playing upon the harp. They will sing the eternal music and will give listening to music. There is a verse in a hymn which was sung at one time in the orthodox churches describing the pleasures in heaven: "Where congregations ne'er break up, and Sabbaths never end". Of course, such a heaven will exist for those who believe in such an ideal. There would be a place or a realm where those souls who believe and have the same faith in the Lord, will congregate and will sing the praise of their Saviour, and the Saviour might be Jesus the Christ, or Buddha, or a Prophet, or some other Saviour as among the Hindus. They will go and gather around their ideal, just as satellites whirl around a planet. So these faithful believers will be held together by their faith to the centre of their ideal which is the Saviour, and he may be Christ or Buddha or any other incarnation of Divinity. So that would be the heaven, the ideal place where the great righteous saints will go.

But these beliefs that have been handed down to us, do not convince us and do not make us feel sure that after the grave we are going into heaven or to eternal perdition. We want to know more about it, and we want more proofs. Now the spiritual seance will tell you that the souls, after passing through the grave, enter into various conditions and become the angels. It is believed that the angels know everything, and they can help humanity, their friends and relatives. But that is a question, whether they can help us in any way. Many people believe that they can, and others deny it. But they do not deny the existence of the souls after death. They believe in the existence of the discarnate souls, but whether they can help us in any way through communications, that is another point, and that point should be understood. But who are the departed ones who communicate with us and who can help us? The popular belief is that no matter how a man lived his life on

this earth, but as soon as he passes through the gates of the grave, he will enter into a realm of activity and will become conscious of everything, will know all the laws, and become perfect; and they have the power to help mankind, by giving messages in various other ways. But those who believe in this kind of ideal, do not understand that our life in future, or after death, will be the continuation of this life. Death is not an enemy of this life, as it has been popularly understood in the orthodox Christianity. Because the orthodox Christianity has made death a terrible enemy of life, and they believe that as soon as one has entered into the realm of death, his life is stereotyped and he is doomed either to enjoy all the pleasures, or to go to eternal perdition and suffer for ever. Therefore death is not such an enemy of life, but is only a state.

Now we can easily understand that it is a stage or passage through which we can go somewhere else if we study the condition of a dying man. Now what happens to a man who is dying? We find that his body and senses are becoming weak. The sensations are getting dim. The physical body does not move. But his psychical powers are becoming keener and stronger. Some of them would develop perhaps the power of clairvoyance and clairaudience. They would see things at a distance. They would hear sounds from a distance. Their keen psychic senses would be developed, and all the powers that are latent now in our subconscious plane, will rise in the conscious plane. Memory will become then stronger. There have been cases where the dying persons went to a distance in the form of an apparition and gave a message, asking the relative to take care of their orphan children or continue to do certain things which they have left unfulfilled and unfinished. Such cases have been recorded. In Europe, only a few years ago these statistics were kept, giving all the particulars of the time, the hour with proper verifications. You will also find in the records and the annals of the Psychological Research Society that have kept such records.

Now what do these records prove? The records prove that there is a power in us which is latent at present perhaps, but at the time of death that power becomes stronger and acute. It has already been discussed before that the dying persons can communicate with their friends and relatives who have passed

out long before their death and who are living in the other world. They can not only communicate with them, but also can communicate with those who are on this earth.¹ Then after their death they pass through a state; that is, the souls contract their powers that are scattered in the waking state, just as we do when we go to sleep. Our central life, the source of intelligence, which is centralized in one point, withdraws all the powers that are scattered all over the body, the sense powers, and all these powers are concentrated in that centre, which is like a nucleus. This nucleus holds those powers at the time of sleep, and at the time of death the same thing happens.² It is only a deeper sleep than our ordinary sleep. At the time of death the soul contracts and becomes concentrated into that central nucleus where the sense powers, the thought powers, the reasoning faculties, the memory and all other powers are held together by that life-force which is an inherent property of the individual soul. By that individual soul I mean here the thinker, that which thinks, that which feels, that which perceives, and that which knows. Then that individual soul withdraws his powers just as you have noticed perhaps in the case of a turtle. Now when a turtle is frightened, what does it do? It withdraws its limbs within the shell. That very illustration had been given in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2-58):

यदा संहरते चायं कर्मोऽङ्गानीष सर्वशः ।

‘The soul withdraws its limbs inside its shell, just as a turtle when frightened would withdraw its limbs within its shell’.

You can imagine that the process takes place just before the time of death and then that entity or that thinker has a subtle form, which is called in Sanskrit the *sukshma-sharira*. It may

¹ The departed souls can communicate with both the souls who have already passed and who are living in this phenomenal world.

² This nucleus is called the *prana* or the *mukhya-prana* (the life-force). “As the *prana* leaves the body it takes with it all the sense-powers, which are dependent upon it. The dying man carries with him the powers of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, seizing, moving, speaking, excreting, generating and the power of thinking as well as self-consciousness. All the vital forces and subconscious activities of the organs are also withdrawn when *prana* leaves the body.”—Swami Abhedananda. *Self-knowledge*, p. 63 Cf. *Kausitaki Upanishad* (III. 4).

be called the spiritual body or the astral body, and that spiritual or astral body goes out of the physical body at the time of death like a mist. It is an imperceptible mist. There are some psychists who have the power to see that mist, and by sensitive photographic plates they have taken the photographs of that mist although it is imperceptible to human eyes. The scientific experiments have also proved that the dead, if placed upon a very sensitive scale and weighed just before death and immediately after death, a decisive difference in the weight will be found. The body will lose about one-half or three quarters of an ounce. That three-quarters of an ounce is the weight of that mist that goes out of the body, and it has been photographed. There have been cases which have been recorded. I have mentioned before the case of a young girl who was standing beside her dying brother and she said: 'Mother, mother, look at the mist around the body.' But the mother could not see the mist around the body'

This mist is only the inner garment of the soul. It is not the soul. The soul is the centre or nucleus, and mist is the finer garment. It is the subtle body and that subtle body remains after death. Where does it go after death? Then it hovers around the body which is left behind for a long time. If the body is preserved in the grave, the attraction of the physical body which it loved so dearly and which he took care of for so many years with so much love, attracts the soul, or rather the soul clings to that body. For that reason the Hindu belief is that it is better to destroy the body. The destruction of the gross body releases the soul from its attachment to the material body. But, if it is put into the grave, the soul has the desire to come and look at the body and even after it has passed out for a long time, it has that desire and curiosity to see what is happening in the grave. That is a very undesirable state, and it makes the soul unhappy. It is agony to see for the departed soul that his beautiful body decaying and disintegrating. It is very undesirable that the souls should suffer even in the other world. For that reason, cremation has been considered as the best way of disposing of the body. The Hindus say that sooner it is destroyed, the quicker the soul forgets its existence which is better for the soul to forget the existence of the dead body which is left behind.

Then what happens to the soul? The soul, remaining clothed with the finer garment of the subtle body, enters the borderland where this earth ends and the new spirit-world begins. That is called the borderland. But really it is not a land, and there is no line of demarcation in the external space like the horizon. It is the different state of vibration. It is another dimension. Now we are living in the third dimension where we have the knowledge of the length, breadth and height. But we do not know all these things after death. That is the fourth dimension. In that fourth dimension these things like the time and space-divisions do not exist, and yet it occupies the same space. You imagine that the earth is a hollow form, just as an outline, and it has no solid substance in it. There the souls exist, and they come out from that plane of that fourth dimension to our third dimension, and we can see and feel them. Our soul's coming on the earth is like going down to the bottom of the ocean. But when you go there, what will you have to do? You will have to put on a diver's suit, which weighs tons. If you do not put it on, you cannot go down. If you have a finer body, you cannot come and remain on this plane. You will go into a different plane where the vibration will harmonize with your physical form. For that reason we say that the borderland is not like a place or a corridor leading from this room to other room behind the wall. It has been said that it is a different kind of vibration. The same vibration may be continued, but we have not the power to perceive that vibration. If we have the finer senses, we shall be able to see them and perceive their existence. For instance, there may be music, a concert, and there are different notes which represent different vibrations of sound, or vibration of air, in a different scale with different keys. Now all might be combined into a beautiful harmony, but if you want to hear distinctly each sound or note which is on a different key, you must be conscious of it. Imagine that in this space there are wireless messages that are going on, but one does not interfere with the other, because each one has a different vibration. So each individual soul which passes out of the body, takes his own vibrations with him which are no other than the thoughts and the ideas of the soul. The thoughts and ideas of the soul are nothing but the vibrations, and he is the centre, radiating all these vibrations

constantly. He takes them with him, and, therefore, he does not interfere with any other centre of vibration. He carries them in his own realm, and there he remains for some time until he may go into a state of slumber which is a sleep state, because the exhaustion after doing all his physical labour while living on this earth, is so great that the soul likes to rest and remains in that restful sleep. Nothing can disturb the soul when it enters into that sleep. Even God cannot disturb the sleeping soul. But those who have passed away in anxiety, sorrow, and suffering, will have a disturbed sleep. They cannot go into a perfect rest. But, on account of attachment, they dream that their earthly friends and relatives weep and wail and grieve. They walk, as it were, in sleep like a somnambulist, a half sleeping and drowsy state. That is why you find many of their manifestations in seances are dreamy, half sleeping and idiotic. They are dragged down by the invocations of their friends, and they come and try in their dream state to help them, but they do not know what they are doing. There are certain souls who do not know that they are dead. They are in a state of confusion. It requires some time for them to realize that they are dead. They remain some time earth bound i.e. if they have strong attachment for their friends and relatives whom they loved so much on earth, they hover around them. But it causes them great sorrow and suffering when their friends and relatives do not recognize their presence and do not treat them properly. So each soul will make his own environment and condition according to his thoughts and deeds

So we understand that there is not a general law for everybody. Just as two individuals are not equally alike, so two souls will not be in the same state of vibration after death. After entering into that borderland, the souls will go into that slumber and remain there indefinitely. Some souls will remain longer in that sleep, and others will remain shorter. Those that are strongly attached to immoral and animal desires, will not have a long sleep, because they will wake up by their desires which will sprout in that state. Some will remain earth-bound, and they will remain in that state, and gratify their earthly desires, and will perhaps pick out some mediums through whom they can gratify their desires of drinking and immorality, and this is why you find a great many mediums have turned out to

be drunken and immoral. It is not the fault of the mediums, but it is the fault of the spirit who is trying to gratify his immoral tendencies and desires through the sense organs of the medium. And, for that reason, it is very dangerous to allow these spirits to come and take possession of our physical forms and organs. There is one law about it and that law should be understood very clearly. We have taken this body as the result of our thoughts and deeds which we had in the past ; we have manufactured this body to rise higher to gain more experience for ourselves, not for anybody else. Suppose we allow other spirits to come and manifest through us, but what do we gain by it ? Really we gain nothing by it. We have sacrificed our opportunity, and that is our loss. We may say that we are helping humanity, but we are not doing so. We have been put into a hypnotic sleep and we are unconscious.

Our organs have been used by somebody else, or by some other force, and this other force is gaining experience through us and we are depriving us of our own opportunity for the good of that spirit who is manifesting through us. That consideration has been overlooked by great many of those who are interested in the spirit-manifestations and in communications with the departed ones. The Hindus are the people who from time immemorial have studied the spiritual side and have recorded the result and have left their knowledge which has been handed down to us through generations. There is no other nation in the world which has so perfect a knowledge in these lines, as we have in India. For that reason, you will notice that we do not allow our friends to go into that trance or mediumistic condition, because there is a great danger in it, and if you once open your psychic door, you cannot close it very easily. There are some spirits who are fraudulent and can impersonate as somebody else and fool the people. Such cases have been recorded. Some one will appear as a great soul, but, in reality, he is not great. How are you going to distinguish them ? Of course, not by their apparent wise counsels which they can borrow from the subconscious mind of anybody. That discrimination should be made, and we must realize the difference between the higher and the lower spirits, and also that whenever we allow them to come to us for any message, we are dragging them to the earth plane. It is not helpful to them.

For that reason, the Hindus believe that it is better in every way to leave these spirits alone, and if they have gone into the slumber, let them rest there, and send them the good thoughts, because the good thoughts will only be useful and beneficial to them.

The funeral ceremonies among the Hindus are different from those of the Christians. The difference lies in these that the services for the departed ones are performed, the good acts and the charitable works are done in the name of them, with the thought that the result of these works will go to them. That will release them from their earth-bound condition. We can help the spirits more than they can help us, because they are nearer to our thought realm.¹ If we send them a good thought, we are helping them, because thought is the product of the mind, and the departed souls remain in the mental world, and so thought can easily reach them. So, if we do any good act in their name, and if we concentrate our mind with the thought that the result of this good work will go to them to help them in their onward progress, we are doing good to them. They can give us sometimes certain messages. Some of them who are advanced and have understood the law of cause and effect and are conscious of the causes, can trace the results.

For instance, you have a certain thought in your mind and that is the seed of a future result which is bound to come to you. If anyone can read that thought that you have in a seed form just now, he can tell what will happen in your future. The psychometrists can do that, rolling in that idea and producing an effect like the blossoming of a flower. It is all there in the mind. It is a vibratory state of the mind. That vibratory state can be realized by those who are advanced in the psychic planes and develop the psychic powers. So we cannot make one rule for everybody. Some will sleep in that slumber for a long time, and those souls who are spiritually advanced and highly developed, will throw off these subtle forms which are like the sheaths (*kosha*)² of the soul. These are the limitations. These are also the animal desires and tendencies, jealousy and love for material things. All those are the limitations of the soul.

¹ *Vide Notes*

² In truth, the sheaths or *koshas* are the coverings, and they are the assuming coverings of the mind, or of the consciousness

The soul, after sleeping for some time, when realizes that it is under limitations, discards them. These discarded shells are sometimes called the astral shells, and these astral shells float around. There is no soul in them. They are like thought forms, and these thought-forms might be reanimated by the thought of the medium or of any individual. So you may see some ghosts or elementals. They are all like them. There are other elementals of lower animal spirits i.e. they have not yet become human beings. They are rising in the process of evolution. These might come and might be perceived after waking from the soul-slumber, and then these souls enter into the astral plane. They might have a very peaceful rest, and then they go into those planes where they can realize the fulfilment of their desires. Those are the planes which we call the heavens where we have fulfilment of our desires, thoughts, and deeds. If we have performed good deeds, those impressions are left there and those impressions will gradually sprout and produce the result by the law of cause and sequence. Those results are reaped by the individuals in those different realms which are called the heavens (*svargas*), and those are the ideals of different nations. So you see that those who have a desire to enjoy pleasures like the pleasures in a particular heaven where there is plenty to eat and drink, and shade and a cool place, will dream of such a state. Their ideals will be materialized, as it were. The realm of thought-form is like the realm where their thought is realized as truth, just as in a dream. When you dream a dream, you do not know that it is a dream, but you know that it is real and it is a thought-form that you are perceiving. You may look at it, you may touch it, you may hear the sound, but they are all in the realm of thoughts. So there are no real scenes or trees or different roads and canals except in the thought-forms. They are like a dreamland, and there the soul remains and enjoys those pleasures, because it wanted them. It is the plane for fulfilment of thoughts and desires. After a while when those desires are fulfilled, the souls get tired of that condition. Then the soul wants change and it gets out of those conditions. It wants something different. There are many souls in the other realm who are tired or exhausted. They want a more tangible and sensible or perceptible realization of their ideals and thoughts. So they like to go to different planes

or realms. Some of them would like to come down on this earth to enjoy more pleasures and develop more powers, and so they are born and reincarnated. Some of them have the power to choose their parents. Some will go to sleep again.

The sleep after death is like the sleep before birth. Then they have a second sleep. Before they come to this plane, they go into that sleep and gravitate towards the proper environment. If I have a strong desire to be the best artist and if I do not succeed or pass away before I fulfil my desire, that desire will remain in me even in that soul-slumber. It will sprout again. Perhaps I will be drawn into the heaven of the artists where I would have communication and communion with the other artists who are living there and exchange our thoughts perhaps. Then I will try to manifest that desire again once more on this plane, and I will gravitate under the proper conditions and environments where I will have the physical body which will be the instrument through which I would realize my ideal. That is the process that takes place.

So there is no eternal heaven or eternal place of any punishment. If there be any punishment at all, it is like the punishment as we have on the earth plane. That punishment you will get. When you desire a thing and cannot get it, that is hell. That state you may go through on account of strong attachment. A miser who has formed the habit of handling dollars and cents, enjoys it and loves it. Now, if he goes into that plane or astral plane, he will carry that desire with him. But he will have no dollars and cents to handle and he will be hankering after that and that will be his punishment. So it is very difficult for us to know exactly what would be the hell or that state of punishment for any individual who has committed something wrong. It is all that we draw towards ourselves by our thoughts and deeds. These dreams might be real for the time being, as all dreams are true, so long as we are dreaming. But, in reality, when compared with the eternal time, or when compared with the highest standard, they last only for a short period. So no heaven is eternal, and no hell is eternal: For that reason, it is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* (8.16):

आव्रह्मभुवनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।

‘O Arjuna, none of these heavens from the highest heaven

of the Creator downward is permanent. The inhabitants thereof are sure to return from them sooner or later'.

They are ephemeral. They do not last throughout eternity in one state. So this is a progress that the soul makes after entering into the grave. Either he will go to heaven, or suffer according to the law of justice. The law of justice is very strict. There is no such thing as forgiveness, but it is the justice that balances compensation. The well-balanced state of the law of cause and effect is inexorable. 'Whatsoever thou sowest thou shalt reap'. That is as strong and as real as you are sitting here now. You may deny it, but you cannot get out of it. You may deny through ignorance the force of gravity, but at every step you cannot move, and cannot even exist on the surface of the earth, if it were not for the force of gravity. A child does not know whether there is such a thing as gravity, and his ignorance does not affect the law in any way. Our childish denial does not make a thing non-existent, and it simply shows that we do not know better. So this law of cause and sequence which is called the law of *karma*, does not wait for widow's tears, or orphan's cries. What we have sown, we must reap either on this plane, or in some other realm. So after death we may enjoy the pleasures of our thoughts and deeds in the heavenly regions too.

The occupations may be according to the belief that we will continue to do certain things. It is not true however that all the types of our earthly occupations will be reproduced there. That is not possible. If it were so, then life would not be worth-living. Suppose a street-cleaner has to clean the streets of heaven throughout eternity, a cook or a seamstress will have to continue to do the same work throughout eternity; so what kind of heaven would that be? It would be the opposite place, according to our conception. But there are works and activities of the physical body on the unconscious plane which help the souls who are suffering in the darkness, and give a certain light or knowledge, but even that cannot be done without violating a law, because no one can give us anything unless we deserve it. Those souls which deserve any help, will receive the help. For that reason the widely known common maxim, 'heaven helps those that help themselves', is absolutely true. Because

those who help themselves, have made themselves ready for receiving the help from the universe and if we have not made ourselves ready to receive the help from the universe, the universe does not help us. It depends entirely upon our own worth and attitude. And, for that reason, the great teachers have always told us to be prepared to receive the help and to live on this earth a life that will bring to us peace and happiness, and that will never make us repent even for a second, because we must feel the responsibility that we have upon our shoulders. By coming on this earth and living this earthy life, we have taken the whole burden of the responsibility of our future as well as of whatever we are going to do on this earth, because our character and future are made or created by ourselves. There is no other soul that will mould our future for us, but we are the little creators, and as the creators on a diminutive scale we are making our future, creating our destiny, and building up our character by our thoughts and deeds. And, therefore, we must do it consciously and knowingly, and by understanding the laws that govern our lives, not only on the physical plane, but also on the mental, moral, intellectual, and spiritual planes.

If we understand those laws, then we are opening up vistas of our future progress. We have nothing to be sorry for, when we have nothing to repent. Our earthly life would be a series or a continuous chain of pleasure and happiness, if we know the real conditions and truths that underlie our beings. But these truths are hidden from us, because we have not become ready to know them. We are just playing on the surface, but the time is bound to come for each individual soul when there will be an awakening of a desire to know the real truth. No soul will be lost. Each soul will attain eventually to the highest knowledge or realization, and enter into that state where there is no birth, no death, and no change of any kind but the eternal being, the eternal bliss and the eternal knowledge. So we must not be afraid of death. Death is nothing but a change. We may throw off this old body, because we may put on another new body, if we have such a desire. We also find in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2.13):

देहिनोऽस्मिन् यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं ज्वरा ।
तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥

‘As in our physical body, we survive the death of the baby body, and of the young body, so we live after throwing off the form of the subtle body, as we throw off the old garments and put on new ones.’

So at the time of death we throw off the old physical body which has served its purpose, and put on a new and finer one. Therefore the wise ones will never be afraid of death, but always will remember that there is an eternal life for everybody, and no soul will be lost. Those who have attained to the highest spiritual realization, will eventually come face to face with the Infinite, and attain to that peace and happiness which have been attained by Sri Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Ramakrishna, and by all the other Saviours of the world. Really the attainment of the supreme knowledge is the goal of spiritualism, and it is the be-all and end-all of all human beings.

CHAPTER XVI

DISCUSSIONS THAT WERE PRIVILEGED TO HAVE WITH THE SWAMI

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. In the realm after death, will the soul continue to evolve into a state of perfection, or is it necessary to gravitate back to the earth and reincarnate ?

Ans. It depends upon the desire of the soul.

Q. If the soul can evolve without coming back, would it not be better not to come back.

Ans. They cannot get the same experience in the other realm, as they would get here in the physical form.

Q. Are there enough bodies for all souls that wish to gravitate back and become reincarnated ?

Ans. Well, you have cherished an idea that the bodies are waiting for the souls. That is not correct. The souls manufacture the bodies. The idea that you have expressed is the old belief in transmigration and that the bodies are made ready to receive the migrating souls, but that does not mean reincarnation. I have explained that in my lecture on *Transmigration*. The soul manufactures the body by obeying the physical laws of evolution.

Q. When the angel was cast out of heaven, did he incarnate ?

Ans. Well, that is a mythological belief. By the angel from heaven, you mean him who became Satan. That is a mythological belief that the angel disobeyed the personal Creator. Then He expelled him, and so he fell on this earth. That is a crude kind of explanation, which was given by the primitive minds. There was no actual truth about it. They tried to explain good and evil in nature by that mythology. It was not an actual fact.

Q. You say the dead do not know that they are dead.

Ans. They do not know. It takes a long time for them to realize that they passed out.

Q. What assurance have we that we are alive ?

Ans. There is no proof. We may call ourselves dead.

Q. How are you going to stop the spirits that are drunk from making the mediums drunk ?

Ans. The spirit who has been a drunkard on this earth, has carried that desire with him, and he wants to drink. But he cannot find drink there, and he wants to hover around the brothels. So he takes possession of a medium or some friend or relative, and drives him to drink, so that he enjoys the flavour of it.

Q. How is the obsessed man going to stop it ?

Ans. Well, you would have to dehypnotize him. The medium should be exercised, that is, the obsession could be cured by a higher spirit of higher development. If you know somebody who has a familiar spirit of higher nature, that higher spirit will drive him out by command or by will-power, but the patient might not have that will-power, he requires freedom from another soul to be cured.

Q. Can a soul remain in one particular physical body indefinitely ?

Ans. Yes, it can, if it has understood the laws and lived the right life.

Q. Why did the ancients take out heart and place there a scarb ?

Ans. That was their belief. The scarb was the symbol of creation.

Q. You stated that if the body lay in the grave, the soul would suffer when it return and see that body. Would not the soul suffer more if the body were burnt ?

Ans. It might do for a while, if they are conscious that their body is destroyed. It might shock them for a little, but after it is destroyed they would forget. It would be the easiest way to make them forget, because they cannot come and look at it. But if the body is preserved, then that attraction of the body will attract the soul down, and it may occur many times. So there is an advantage in cremation.

Q. What is the shortest time in years that a spirit soul would remain in dream or in an unconscious state ?

Ans. Our time does not affect them. Our five thousand years might be five seconds to them.

Q. But how long would it be ? Ten years ?

Ans. Well, that I have already told you.

Q. The Hindus have a way that when somebody dies they put a jar of water and a towel, and they believe that the soul comes for them eight times. Where did that originate ?

Ans. I never saw anything like that. There might be some superstitious belief, but we never saw anything like that, that the souls need food, that the souls of the departed ones require nourishment. Some people offer food once a year and our one year may be one day to them ; so once a year they offer food in their name, but the poor people get the benefit.

Q. Do we know our friends there ?

Ans. Yes, we do.

Q. What is the difference between reincarnation and transmigration ?

Ans. Our religion teaches reincarnation, which is a little different from transmigration. Reincarnation is more scientific. It does not teach that we come back from the human plane to the animal bodies indiscriminately simply to gratify our whims.

Q. Do I understand that the soul divides itself into two parts ?

Ans. No, it is what we call the subtle body. It is the body which the soul has manufactured already. It is there now in you and in me. It is not divided, only it takes shelter in the finer spiritual form, and it remains with it while it goes into that slumber and in that astral shell.

Q. What is this mist you were talking about ?

Ans. That mist is only the finer elements like electrons going out of the body.

Q. Has it anything to do with the soul after death ?

Ans. The soul is the centre which contains life, mind, and intelligence, and the mist is not that. Mist is only the particles of matter amassed together like a cloud or vapour.

Q. Is that the ego ?

Ans. The ego is in the centre. It is not manifested but it is in a causal state like a nucleus, like an atom.

Q. What becomes of the ego ?

Ans. It is there, only it is then potential, unmanifested.

Q. Is the soul given a power over the physical body ?

Ans. Yes, the healing power is in the soul.

APPENDIX A

A SUMMARY OF SWAMI ABHEDANANDA'S SPEECH AT AN ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF THE PSYCHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY OF CALCUTTA.

In 1925, the anniversary meeting of the Psychical Research Society of Calcutta was held in the Arya Samaj Hall, located at the Cornwallis Street,¹ Calcutta. His Highness Maharaja the late Kameshwar Singh Bahadur of Darbhanga presided over the meeting. It was a distinguished gathering. Many prominent persons like Maharaja Sir Pradyot Kumar Tagore, Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nundy of Cossimbazar, Pandit Shyam Sunder Chakravarty, Editor of the *Servant* (now defunct), and a number of veteran physicians, physicists, and scholars of the great City of Calcutta were present on that occasion. SWAMI ABHEDANANDA was also invited to deliver there a speech on Spiritualism. Long before the hour announced for the meeting the spacious hall was packed to suffocation.

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA, in his flowing ochre-coloured garments, entered the hall a few minutes before the meeting. His noble figure, his bright countenance beaming with inward spiritual light and his serenity made a deep impression on the minds of the audience. It was a sight not to be easily forgotten.

At the outset of the meeting the late Babu Piyush Kanti Ghosh of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and one of the chief organizers of the meeting, moved a resolution that SWAMI ABHEDANANDA might be requested to become the President of the Psychical Research Society of Calcutta, during the coming year. The resolution was unanimously carried. After the delivery of the Presidential Address, the President respectfully requested SWAMI ABHEDANANDA to deliver his speech.

The Swami in his speech first gave a brief account of the origin, growth and development of the spiritualistic movement in America, and its gradual spread in other countries of the world. He said that during his long stay in America he came

¹ At present Bidhan Sarani

in contact with this movement and some of its leaders well-known in that Continent. Then he very charmingly described his novel experiences as an eye-witness of some famous spiritualistic seances. There he had the opportunity to receive messages from the spirits of many distinguished persons, such as Prof. William James of Harvard, Prof. Myers and others.

The Swami said many things about the various conditions of men after death. After death men have to go through various stages in spirit-life. The man who led here a vicious life must undergo pains and sufferings in a place where absolute darkness reigns in perpetuity. But the case of a man, pious and virtuous, is entirely different.

The Swami continued to describe his various experiences of spirit-communications. At one time he was present in a spiritualistic seance, and a very striking event took place there. A music-box, coated with phosphorus at its bottom, was placed on a table within a dark room. The room was kept for holding a spiritualistic seance. Its doors and windows were all tightly shut up. Hardly had the seance begun when the music-box was suddenly and visibly lifted up and gradually touched the ceiling. Then like a flying bird, it began to move along the four walls of that room with the full play of some particular musical tune. Once there was heard a high sound and the box went outside penetrating through the wall. From outside of the room it began to move in the same way and the flow of the music went on. Then after some fifteen minutes another high sound was heard and the music-box was found in the room. The same tune was still being played. The whole event took only about a quarter of an hour.

There happened an incident in another seance which was no less striking. As the Swami was listening there to the message of some spirit, he suddenly felt the touch of a number of hands all over his body. But he found that there were no such persons around him. He was little surprised when he heard the voices of some spirits addressing him: 'Do you think the medium is doing all these things ?

Then in that very seance there took place another event which was still more surprising. As the Swami was coming back from the dark screen to resume his seat, he was surprised to find that his chair was occupied by a lady. It was not at all a human

being but the materialized body of some spirit. As soon as he came near her, the spirit got up and shook hands with him. He felt that her touch was as tangible and warm as that of a living human body. But in a moment the hand of the spirit, held by him, melted away.

The Swami said that it was possible for some spirits to appear in materialized form without the help of the mediums and they could directly communicate with all. He also said that he had heard how an independent voice in a seance, held in the house of Sir Alfred Turner, addressed him and others present there, with these words: 'Good evening, brother'.

But this power of materializing the body is not possessed by all spirits. Only the spirits advanced in psychic power are able to do this. One thing should be made clear, that though the spirits may assume the materialized bodies, they are not conscious of their material state of existence. So they cannot retain such bodies of theirs for long.

In continuation of his speech, the Swami said that the spiritualistic movement had done much towards dispelling many erroneous and superstitious beliefs from the minds of a large number of bigoted and fanatic Christians. It had given a death blow to the queer belief in the confinement of the departed persons under the grave till the last Day of Judgment. The inquisitive minds in America and in other countries no longer believe that the dead are subject to lie beneath the graves and will be resurrected on the Doomsday to go to an unknown place to receive the judgment for their virtues and vices. The unscientific doctrine of eternal hell-fire upheld by the Christian churches is gradually losing its hold on the learned and thinking people in the West. Now it sounds quite ludicrous to all who have thoroughly rationalized their views.

But in spite of all his interest in spiritualistic movement the Swami did not hesitate to expose its demerits and dark sides. He denied its unjust claim that it solved the problems of the religious life of man. It has by no means been helpful to any spiritual aspirant in finding out the way of salvation. It has always proved futile in shaping the religious character of any person. On the contrary, it has misled him. Under the influence of the spiritualistic movement people have been subject to error, and failed to distinguish religion from spiritualism.

Spiritualism and religion were things quite contrary in their very nature. The function of spiritualism is to deal with the ghosts and spirits while religion always inspires and enables man to tear off his bonds of miseries and imperfection and to realize his higher Self. Obsession with ghosts and the ghost-world degrades the mind, while contemplation of God helps man to raise himself at last to the plane of life divine. In matters spiritual, the spiritualistic movement never comes to any use. The practice of spirit-communication has brought, in many cases, sad results. Spiritualism never elevates the minds of the mediums either intellectually, or morally, or spiritually. Rather it lowers them to a pitiful state. The constant practice of mediumship weakens the mind, destroys the brain-power and the consequence often is insanity and other incurable diseases. Men and women who regularly sit as medium in spiritualistic seances become like passive and thoughtless creatures. People who come under the evil and pernicious influence of the evil spirits often become like the toys in their hands. They are gradually deprived of the power of reasoning and the blessings of human life, and they come to a miserable end. One should not therefore confuse spiritualism with religion. The former may satisfy some of our curiosities; at best it ensures us of the survival of human soul after death. It cannot do anything higher. But the nature of religion is quite different. The practice of religion leads man to the state of unending peace. Religion enables us to transcend the bonds of repeated births and deaths.

In order to transcend the limits and bonds of earthly life, and in order to go beyond ignorance, error and untruth, one has to be fully acquainted with the theory and practice of the vedantic *sadhana*, generally known as the system of Yoga. Without the practice of Yoga no person would be able to set himself free from the bonds of repeated births and deaths. The sincere and systematic practice of Yoga alone can enable a man to unveil the mystery of his own being. This alone is the way to solve all the problems of the soul, of its birth and death, and its existence before and after its appearance in human form. It is religion, and not spiritualism that can help us to know the true nature of our own being, which is essentially all-wise all-pervading, immutable and Divine. The reli-

gious history of the world since ages past has been bearing witness to this fact. All the great seers of Truth, Prophets and Incarnations, who are regarded today as the living embodiments of the spiritual ideal of mankind, had to go through this path of spiritual practice. Their ceaseless and sincere efforts made them free forever from untruth, ignorance and illusion. In attaining to this state of Self-realization they had overcome all sorrows, sufferings and miseries.

It is wrongly believed by many people that the teachings of the Vedanta make the human life dry and monotonous and that we become pessimists. Vedanta, they say, is all rationality. Yes, the Vedanta supports nothing unreasonable. Nor does it indulge in anything without the process of rational analysis. For, without reason there is no other way to distinguish truth from untruth. This process should be applied in order to know the highest Truth, and we cannot help this. But it is far from true that the practice or *sadhana* as enjoined by the Vedanta makes our life dry and pessimistic. On the contrary, it sweetens life with ineffable joy. It leads man to the perennial source of unbounded happiness. The teachings of Vedanta inspire and guide us to realize our oneness and identity with the Infinite. This is the highest goal of all religions. Whosoever realizes this state attains to eternal Bliss even in this life.

APPENDIX B

AN INTERESTING DISCOURSE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE CALCUTTA PSYCHICAL SOCIETY

(Saturday, January 23, 1926)

The fourth monthly meeting of the Society was held sometime in 1926, at the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society Hall, at 40, Beadon Street, under the presidency of His Holiness Swami Abhedananda Maharaj. Long before the appointed hour, the hall and the adjoining rooms were packed up. There was a crowded and appreciative audience, and amongst those present were Mr. G. S. Dutta, I.C.S., Rai Jatindra Nath Chowdhury of Taki, Dr. E. G. H. Bowering, B.S.C.(O) M.B(H), Babus Jogendra Nath Mitter, Basanta Kumar Mitter, Bhut Nath Mukherjee, Dr. M. N. Basu, Babus Balai Chand Mullick, Satish Chandra Sen Gupta, Saroj Kumar Choudhury, Shyama Charan Paul and others. Babu Piyush Kanti Ghosh could not attend on account of illness.

At the commencement, Dr. M. N. Basu in a few well-chosen words, proposed Swami Abhedananda Maharaj to the chair. In doing so he said that the meeting had been organised in order that both the members of the Calcutta Psychical Society and the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society would have the privilege of hearing the personal experiences of the seances of the Western countries from their revered and common president. Both the Societies have the same object in view viz. the realization of their selves. The spiritualists and psychists are being looked down in this country, because it is said that they dabble with ghosts only and have no higher aims. But one cannot be a good psychic unless he leads a pure religious life and practises Yoga.

The Joint Secretary, Babu Saroj Kumar Chaudhuri seconded Dr. Basu's proposal and Swamiji took the presidential chair amidst cheers. The President thereupon introduced Dr. Bowering, a spiritualist, who delivered an interesting address on "Spiritualism". In the course of his address he said that

the scriptures adduce three historical instances as a proof of life after death. They are:

(1) The prophet Samuel 4 years after death at the bidding of the woman at Endor confronts the guilty panic-stricken soul and speaks to him

(2) Moses, apart from the thronging multitudes, but in the sight of the wandering disciples, the bodiless for ages steps out of the unseen world to hold converse with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration so real and man-like that St. Peter wanted to make a Tabernacle for him.

(3) The Master Jesus Christ himself tells us in his Epistle (1 Peter III ? 18-20) that when the body of Jesus was stiffening in death on the Cross the departed tenant was preaching unto "Spirits".

All three of these persons had died and all had left behind the earthly body and yet they stand forth on the page of the divine inspiration as living, thinking and speaking

There is sufficient proof in the Bible about the existence of life after death and more convincing in the words; "He is not a God of the dead but of the living" (Lukes XX 38) As regards the state of unconsciousness between death and judgement, the utterances of Christ, St. Peter and St. Paul together with a conscience of belief of all races and creeds for centuries are against it With regard to life after death, the Bible proclaims it, Jesus confirms it and our reason approves it.

"Tell me at the time of dissolution, I shall lose my consciousness that I shall practically pass to nothingness until the Resurrection morn and I shiver at the thought of being thus chloroformed by death. Tell me that there is an unseen life, but it is dim and shadowy, nebulous and intangible, a world of strangers and unreality and I dread the knock of death which will summon me to such a sphere. But on the other hand, make the new life what the Bible shows it to be a real life when I shall be the same man as I am now. Oh! what a difference will it make, by real self will undergo no change except that of environment and when my Heavenly Father shall call me, I shall learn that for myself there is no death; what seems so is transition".

Babu Satish Chandra Sen Gupta then related his personal experiences as how he talked with a spirit.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The President Swami Abhedananda then delivered a most interesting address which was greatly appreciated by the audience. In narrating his experiences of spiritualistic phenomena he showed photographs of automatic slate writings of discarnate spirits and described in detail the phenomena of slate writings, materialization of spirits and spirit-photography. The President then said. "In America there are very good mediums of all kinds and places where they give demonstrations of spirit communications * * *".

Then the Swami said that he had seen in America portrait painting done by invisible hand of a discarnate spirit done in his presence.

He then concluded by saying "you cannot get all by reading. Through the practice of Raj-Yoga you can be like Sankaracharya and Ramakrishna who were mediums of the Divinity himself. It is said that the spirit of Vyasa came and discussed with Sankaracharya.

If you wish to communicate the spirits of higher order you will have to lead a holy life and become pure and virtuous living on the same plane of vibration with them. You may question, "Why do not the spirits come to you ? Why do not the debates come to you?" The answer is because you are on another plane of vibration. You will have to raise yourself so that your prayer and desire will reach them. You may have desire for communicating with them, but your desire does not reach them, for you are on a lower plane of vibration, that is, "*tamasic* plane".

Therefore you have to pray and practise Yoga in order to purify yourself. Through purity of heart you will be able to converse with the departed souls and unless your heart is pure you will not be able to approach them.

In conclusion, Swamiji said that while in America he saw the astral form of Ramakrishnadeva's wife at the time when she left her mortal coil. He also had the good fortune to see from America Babu Girish Chandra Ghosh and other friends the moment they left this world. Rai Jatindra Nath Choudhury thanked the President for his very able and interesting address.

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WE HAVE GIVEN HERE FROM OUR MEMORY, SOME OF DISCUSSIONS THAT WE WERE PRIVILEGED TO HAVE WITH THE SWAMI:

Q. Swamiji, what becomes of the souls immediately before and after death?

Ans. The soul immediately before death contracts and withdraws all sense-powers gradually. The physical senses grow dimmer and dimmer as a flickering candle-flame gradually approaches ultimate extinction; but the senses and powers grow keen and strong. The soul just before leaving the body lives in an unconscious state like slumber and in that state the astral or spiritual body passes out like a mist.

Q. Then is the condition of the souls beyond their grave awful indeed?

Ans. Yes. The earthbound spirits suffer much. They do not know that they are dead. In that slumber state the souls carry concentrated records of their entire lives. When the souls wake from sleep they enter into an astral plane. This astral plane is nothing but the projection of the souls' own ideas. Their dimensions are in vibrations. The disembodied souls find their ideas realized in that astral plane. They sleep, but their period of sleeps vary.

Q. Do they not enter then into a lonely and foreign realm?

Ans. Yes. Just to make it clear, let us take an example. Suppose you are an inhabitant of a large and thickly populated city like Calcutta. There happens a terrible earthquake in a dead dark night resulting a total devastation of the whole city. The houses fall to pieces and the whole city appears like a vast desert enveloped with deep darkness. Then if you are allowed to move and walk freely with your eyes blind-fold, what

will be your condition? Just imagine. Such is the wretched condition of the earthbound spirits after death.

Q. Is it the same condition with all the spirits?

Ans. No. Ordinary earthbound souls only suffer from it. The case of the virtuous souls is entirely different. They move easily and freely, and can see their ways with the light of their own knowledge and purity.

Q. Swamiji, may we ask you again where the souls really go after death?

Ans. They go where they already are. Where do you stay when you fall asleep? You then stay in the mind. After death the souls need not go to any other place. They continue to stay in the same mental plane just as we do in our state of sleep or dream (*svapna*). The souls then live in the mental plane or *manomaya jagat*. They move and do everything mentally in that state. Nothing of the material plane remains for them. The bodies in which they dwell at that time are subtle and are made of seventeen subtle elements. They are: five *pranas*, five *karmendriyas*, five *jnanendriyas*, the *manas* and the *buddhi*. The composite subtle body of seventeen elements is called by the Sankhya and other Hindu philosophies, *sukshmasarira*.

Q. How do the prayers and good thoughts of the living become helpful to the souls departed?

Ans. I have already said that just after death souls cannot realize themselves as detached from their previous material bodies. They remain in a swoon and are unconscious immediately after death. In that condition prayers of any kind by the well-wishers help the spirits a good deal. Good thoughts from the relatives and the nearest and dearest ones bring alleviating reaction in their mental planes. Thus they create a certain vibration in their stupified condition of mind, restore their veiled consciousness, and thereby the souls come to know that really they are not in their material bodies. The weeping and wailing of their relatives afflict them with pain and thereby some are dragged down from their astral planes. But good prayers bring back their consciousness and then they try to cross the *borderland*. This borderland in vibration is like a narrow river of ether which can be compared to a neutral zone.

It has been called by the Hindus the *Baitarani*, by the Parsis (Zoroastrians) *Chinnat-bridge* and *Sirat* by the Mohammedans.

Ordinary or earthbound spirits cannot cross the borderland easily. They generally go to a region where prevails permanent darkness. This dark astral plane has been described in the *Upanishad* as:

"Asurya nama te loka andhena tamasavritah ; tamaste pretyabhigacchanti ye ke chatmahano janhha"—Isha Upanishad, 1.3:

'There are the regions of permanent darkness ; the light of the sun or other luminaries is never seen there. Those who have not realized their true Self or do not strive for Self-realization, must go to that dark region after death'

The sun, the moon and the stars cannot shine in the spirit-world as they belong to this material world of ours. There is no room for any earthly or material thing in that subtle world beyond death.

Q. Is then the condition of the earthbound spirits worse after death ?

Ans. Yes. In the case of the earthbound souls desires are not fulfilled and so their sufferings become worse and worse. They dig their own graves. All desires for material enjoyment then reach the most acute form. The souls then suffer from the burning flames of those unfulfilled passions.

In fact, what you will sow you will reap. The desires remain in the form of impressions or *samskaras*. The death of the body cannot destroy the *samskaras*. After death they remain as the seed-forms in the mind.

Q. Swamiji, what is meant by the *double* or astral body ?

Ans. Double or astral body is nothing but an exact counterpart of the physical body. The astral body leaves or goes out of the physical body at the time of death, and when it leaves the latter, there remains still a slender thread or cord of astral or vapourlike substance. Finally it also melts away. The soul remains then in a state of coma resembling the condition of an unborn child in the mother's womb.

Q. Is it possible to communicate with the dead ?

Ans. Certainly. Generally the half-awakened souls manifest themselves in spiritualistic circles through the channel of the medium. Some are dragged down from their peaceful sleep to answer our selfish calls and some themselves are eager enough to communicate. They appear in a dreamy state. Sometimes it has been found that, seeing the mediumistic channel open, they lose their self-control.

Q. Can the disembodied spirits take any material form ?

Ans. Yes, they can. Astral shells or astral corpses of the departed spirits may be materialized temporarily by means of the vitality of the mediums in their unconscious state. They appear in shadowy forms, move and even speak sometimes. Men who have psychic power can see these shadowy forms of the spirits. Experiments have been made by the spiritualists many a time, proving that the psychical corpses can be aroused into apparent life by a strong mediumistic current.

Q. Do the departed souls incarnate again on earth ?

Ans. Yes. Until and unless they are able to break the bonds of desire and transcend the cycles of birth and death, they are born again and again on earth. Sooner or later the departed souls feel a strong desire to manifest themselves again in new life. The seeds of their unsatisfied desires compel them to be born again on earth. So they select their fit parents, circumstances and surroundings before being born. They fall again into a state of soul-slumber, and die on the astral plane as they did before on earth. By the same cyclic process of evolution and involution they are born in a state of partial slumber. They awake gradually from the dream-like states to the consciousness of the earth-plane.

Q. Is it not good to culture spiritualism for the knowledge of the world beyond death ?

Ans. It is not good, I think, for those who really aspire to realize the supreme knowledge of the *Atman*. It is our aim of life not to acquire knowledge of things fleeting and unreal, but to reach the goal which is the absolute Truth and Blessedness. Spirit-worlds may be true from the empirical point of view, but really they are nothing but the imageries of the human minds. Spirits are unborn and uncreated and are im-

mortal in their nature Birth and death, coming and passing are merely the appearance. Only through the veil of ignorance a man thinks himself to be dead or born. When his darkness of ignorance is dispelled by the self-effulgent radiance of the *Atman*, he realizes himself as the immortal Bliss Spiritualism does not help us to transcend the cycles of death and birth , the knowledge of the Absolute alone can make us free from it

APPENDIX D

WE REPRODUCE HERE SOME REPORTS OF THE SPEECHES BY THE SWAMI ON THE SUBJECT PUBLISHED IN VARIOUS JOURNALS OF AMERICA

I

FREE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA IN SESSION

Intellectual leaders from all over New England present—Opening Address by Dr. Janes—‘Conception of Immortality’ the topic of this morning.

‘Large and typically Bostonian audience filled the floor and first gallery of the Hollis Street Theatre this morning, at the 32nd annual convention of the Free Religious Association of America, to which delegates have come from many parts of the Continent, but most of the members of which live in this city and vicinity. A glance through the audience showed that a good portion of the intellectual leaders of New England were present.

‘Former President, Thomas Wentworth Higginson being absent on account of illness, Dr. Lewis G. Janes of Cambridge, the newly elected President, occupied the Chair at the morning session of the convention, and made a brief opening address, saying that having attended the first meeting of the Free Religious Association as a young man, 32 years ago, he had been profoundly influenced by it, and his whole life changed. He said that he would like to see the whole world under the banner of free religion and the sects cease to strive against each other. ‘I would like’, he continued, ‘to see political reforms brought about. When I heard Emerson and Lucretia Mott speak at the initial meeting I thought the presidency of this Society was a position of greater honour than the presidency of the United States; and there has been nothing in the recent conduct of

'A brief recess gave the treasurer an opportunity to canvass the audience for funds, and then Miss Anna Boynton Thompson of Boston explained the views of the transcendentalists upon immortality

'The transcendental theory', said Miss Thompson, 'considers the consciousness as the gateway of knowledge. God, the uncaused first cause, is freedom, and we are each created in His image; immortality is quantitative, and lies in power of every one who wills to have it, working right for the sake of right. The individuality working the right is as really immortal as God's life, of which it is a part. Only when I will do right for its own sake, do I really exist, and in that case my existence is eternal

'I believe that the ego is God uncreated, and that itself creates, seeing the divine will in its constant progress, doing the will actualizing the divine vision. Be ye yourselves the Christ and ye are yourselves immortal life.'

'Because of the lateness of the hour, President Janes omitted his paper, which included the scientific argument, and introduced as the last speaker, SWAMI ABHEDANANDA of India, now working in the United States as a Hindu missionary.

'The Swami said that the doctrine of immortality had its origin among the Aryans of ancient India. He quoted from the Book of Ecclesiastes to show that Solomon had no faith in a future life after death and said that the world is still full of agnostics, who deny that after a man dies he can live again. The miraculous resurrection of a single person no longer is enough to make a living hope in a future life. Those who believe in that resurrection may deny hope for the future to us who doubt it, but their words no longer strongly influence the world

'The impenetrable wall that seems to surround those who would look beyond the grave is simply the idea men have that the soul is produced by the body and that when the body is destroyed, the soul is also ended. The Hindus believe that each individual soul has existed before, meaning by soul the subtle body or ego, the germ of life. When this germ has finished its work in one physical body, it drops the old envelope and manufactures a new one. This ego is imperishable. As to death, we may say there is no annihilation in the uni-

verse, but, it is full of change, and the subtle body continues to change through evolution, until the purposes of life are fulfilled, perfection is attained, and all the inherent powers are fully developed. We understand that this subtle body is not our true nature but a receptacle for that spirit which forms a part of the universal Spirit, like a circle whose centre is everywhere and its circumference nowhere. This inclusive Spirit is the ultimate absolute God, worshipped in different parts of the world as Allah, Christ, Buddha, or Father in heaven. He is free from all changes, and subject to no limitations. This Spirit fills all the universe, embraces all life, and is the source of all actions.

‘The object of all religions is the same, the attainment of immortality, the cultivation of the soul. Christianity misses its ideal when it turns to dogmas and beliefs, instead of pursuing soul culture’

—BOSTON HERALD, JUNE 2, 1899.

II

NEW ENGLAND CREMATION

THEY LISTEN TO TALKS BY JOHN STORER COBB, THEIR FOUNDER,
AND BY SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

(A)

‘A public meeting was held under the auspices of the New England Cremation Society yesterday afternoon in Wesleyan Hall Harrison Otis Apthorp, President of the Society, presided, and brief addresses were made by Rev. Paul Revere Forthingham of New Bedford, Rev Samuel M. Crothers of Cambridge, the SWAMI ABHEDANANDA of India, who spoke on *Cremation in India*, John Storer Cobb, founder of the Society, and others.

‘Rev. Mr. Forthingham spoke of the great antiquity of the practice of cremation. It was formerly a sort of religious ceremony, and very sacred, and a distinguished honour to the bodies of the dead to be burned. There had always been something deeply religious about flame, and even now there was something sacred about the use of fire. The practice of cremation

strengthened spirituality in man, in his opinion, for it emphasized the distinction between the spirit and the body.

'Rev. Samuel M. Crothers of Cambridge also spoke strongly in favour of cremation.

'The SWAMI ABHEDANANDA told of the practice of cremation in his country, which, he said, dated from prehistoric times. It has been deemed the most healthful way of disposing of the bodies of the dead. It was believed by the Parsees that the body should be destroyed as soon as possible after the spirit had left it. The Hindoos believed the spirit was entirely separate from the body. The spirit was the real man, and the body was but the shell in which it was kept.'

—BOSTON JOURNAL, JUNE 2, 1899

(B)

'A native Hindoo, SWAMI ABHEDANANDA of India, a young man with an intelligent face and a command on the choicest English, spoke most interestingly of cremation in India, saying that it dated from prehistoric times. There was no need of cremation societies. The Hindoos know this way of disposing of the dead

'Unlike the Egyptians who associated the body and soul so closely that they could not conceive of the one existing without the other, and so were driven to the embalming of the one to make sure the happy existence of the other. The Hindoos held the higher view that the soul was everything and the body was nothing—only the house in which the man lived and is reduced to nothingness as soon as possible after its immortal tenant had gone out of it.'

—BOSTON TRAVELLER, JUNE 2, 1899

III

DELIVERED IN THE OUTLOOK CLUB, NEW YORK

'We think that at birth, the soul comes from God. The Hindu believes that the soul exists before and after the death of the body. This belief solves many problems of life; it explains

Society's room, 62. West Seventy-first Street. He said that he had seen materialization and had received spirit messages both in Sanskrit and Bengali about which he believed there was no mistake.

'Admitting the fundamental facts of Spiritualism, he denounced the practice of mediumship, declaring that the negative state essential to it led in many cases to the loss of memory, loss of the power of reasoning and self-control, to the dulling of the moral sense and not infrequently to insanity. For this reason in India from ancient times the Yogis and the spiritual teachers have always guarded their pupils and disciples from becoming mediums and have instead taught them how they could develop the psychic powers which would make them masters of themselves and the realm of spirits.'

—NEW YORK HERALD, FEBRUARY 13, 1905.

VI

'There is some good in Spiritualism,' said the Swami. 'Why did we come into life all of a sudden if we did not live before and will not live after life leaves the human body?' he asked

'Treating the question of immortality scientifically, the Swami declared: *Science shows that something cannot come out of nothing, that life must have existed in substance before it came into the human body.*'

—PITTSBURGH POST, JANUARY 26, 1907.

VII

'Vedanta, it is claimed, explains the fundamental principles of Spiritualism, tells us how the soul exists after death, what kind of soul can communicate with us, and how the earth-bound souls, being subject to the law of *karma* and causation, reincarnate on this earth taking human form again and again.'

—CHICAGO INTER-OCEAN, OCTOBER 26, 1908.

VIII

WEST CORNWALL SWAMI DISCUSSES
HIS PHILOSOPHY:

“* * What is the Vedanta theory of the transmigration of the soul? Let me say first that we believe that the souls of the departed takes up the new life in human bodies, as opposed to the Platonic view that the soul sometimes takes up the new existence in the body of an animal.

‘The Indian version of transmigration is that each soul is bound to receive its body as a natural consequence of its former deeds and misdeeds, and not to have free choice of its lot. This is the law of cause and effect. The universal law of cause and effect, let me add, was discovered by the great thinkers of India. They gave it the Sanskrit term *karma*. The law of *karma* has become one of the fundamental truths of modern science. Scientists gave it different names. They variously term it the law of causation, the law of compensation, the law of action and reaction, etc. But they all have the same idea in mind, namely that every cause is productive of a corresponding result, that every action is productive of a corresponding reaction.

‘The law of *karma* controls our birth and re-birth. Our belief is that the parents do not create the souls. They are merely the channels through which the migrating souls receive their material forms. The souls come with their desires.

‘When death comes, the soul does not manifest until the surroundings become favourable for a manifestation.

‘Our belief that the soul takes up new life in the human body, and never in the body of an animal, makes our theory one of re-incarnation rather than of mere transmigration. Why should the soul choose to become an animal? We argue, by the process of evolution the human soul has already passed through different stages of animality. It would not want to revert to animality. It is unscientific to think otherwise.

‘A noted professor has said of the theory of transmigration: *None but hasty thinkers will reject it on the ground of inherent absurdity. Like the doctrine of evolution itself that of transmigration has its roots in the world of reality.*

—WATERBURY HERALD, ‘CONN.’ (Editorial Sec.), OCT. 14, 1917.

IX

THE SWAMI ARRIVES.

'Five miles from West Cornwall the SWAMI ABHEDANANDA, Hindu philosopher and well-known writer on Vedantism, holds forth. * *

'I am a teacher of philosophy,' said the Swami, 'the Vedanta philosophy, or religion, as you choose to call it. The fundamental principle of this school of thought is a belief in the immortality of the soul. After the death of the body, the soul continues to live, but for sometime it goes neither to heaven nor to hell. It gravitates. Take the souls of the soldiers who die on the battlefields. For the most part these men are so suddenly killed that they are not conscious of their corporeal non-existence. For a time their souls remain on different planes of the spiritual world. Then, according to the worth that each man displayed on earth, his soul is dealt with. The worthy are rewarded, the unworthy punished. But there is no eternal damnation. We consider such ideas foolish. Nor only shall we all be saved, but eventually we shall all, like God, be perfect.

'We believe that there is a heaven to meet the desires of each and every one of us ; in other words, that there is a musician's heaven, an artist's heaven, a heaven for the mechanically inclined, etc. When I speak of heaven and hell, I do not speak of them as being definite destinations of the soul. Heaven and hell are merely mental conditions. Suppose, for instance, a man was a miser all of his life. After death his punishment would be a continuation of his earthly longing for gold, with the attendant impossibility of gratifying this desire.

'It is our idea that one's present existence on earth is an expression of the past lives that one has led. We believe that there is an indefinite series of births and re-births ; that through this process enlightenment comes to us.'

—NEW YORK HERALD, SUNDAY, OCT. 14, 1917.

APPENDIX E

NOTES ON DIFFERENT CHAPTERS

1. * * * The Lokayata school believes consciousness or soul to be the product of physical elements.

It says that the soul is nothing but a by product of the four physical elements, earth, water, fire and air,—“*prithivya apaha tejo vayuh iti chattari tattvani tebhya chaitanyam iti.*” According to the Lokayatas the existence of the soul or consciousness ceases to function with the death of the physical body,—“*paralokinobhavaḥ paralokabhava iti.*” Therefore, there is no such thing like the world after death. The soul means, according to them, the physical body which dies.

2. * * * ‘When Ralph Waldo Emerson went to meet Carlyle in London, Carlyle presented to Emerson a copy of the English translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* by Charles Wilkins and said, ‘I have been inspired by the teachings of *Bhagavad Gita* and I hope that you will be similarly inspired by them. ‘Emerson after reading the *Gita* wrote that beautiful poem on *Brahm.*’—Swami Abhedananda: *Leaves from My Diary*, p. 38.

3. * * * The resurrection of the corpse was one of the earliest beliefs about the soul after death. Some say that the belief in, and the conception of the soul, or a ‘double’ apart from the body grew out of the sun’s daily rise and setting. As the sun sets and rises again in the sky in the next morning, so the soul of a man leaves the body to enter it again after the interval of a certain length of a specified time.

This early conception of the vedic Aryans was transmitted through the trade route to Egypt, Babylon, Phoenicia, and other countries lying on either coast of the Mediterranean sea giving rise to the kindred allegorical stories of Tammuz, Attis, Adonis, Osirs, Demeter, Istar, Cybele, Apphrodite, Hermes, Mithras and other legends of the kind. The solar origin of these deities as well as of the Jesus the Christ has been recognized by J. M. Robertson, Arthur Drews, Conybeare and a whole host of European scholars. Sir Frazer on the other hand ascribes the

phenomena of resurrection upon the annual suspension and the rejuvenation of the plant-life in the seasons of winter and spring respectively.

4. * * * Embalming is a method of preserving bodies by injections and dressings, either internally or externally applied.

'This term is generally given to the process employed by the ancient Egyptians and others, by which corpses were preserved as mummies * *. The most elaborate process was somewhat as follows:

'A deep cut was made beneath the ribs on the left side, and through the opening thus made, the internal organs were removed, with the exception of the heart and kidneys. The brain was also extracted through the nose by means of a bent iron instrument. The cavities of the skull and trunk were washed out with palm-wine, and filled with raisins, Cassia, and similar substances; and the skull was dressed by injecting drugs of various kinds through the nostrils. The body was then soaked in natron for seventy days. It was then removed and wrapped carefully in linen cloth, cemented by gum.

'The less expensive process consisted in removing only the brains and injecting the viscera with cedar oil. When the body was soaked in natron for the same period of time (seventy days), the viscera and soft parts came away *en masae*, and only the skin and bones were left. The very poor, who could not afford either of the above methods, embalmed their dead by washing the body in myrrh and salting it for seventy days.'—W.H. Carrington & Meader: *Death*, pp. 85-86.

5. * * * We find in the Rig Veda, both the customs of burial (*anagnidhana*) and cremation (*agnidhaana*) are mentioned in the same 10th Mandala. From the 14th to the 18th Mandala, Yama and Agni are mentioned. In the 1st Mantra of the 16th Sukta there is mentioned: "*mainamagne bi daho nabhi schocho, masyatvachang chuktipa ma sariram: yada sritam krinavo jatavedo themenam pra rinutata pithbhya.*" That is, 'O Agni, do not burn the dead body completely, do not give him pain, do not scatter his skin or body. When his body will be burnt well with your flames, do send him to the *pitriloka*.'

This invoking Mantra bears testimony to the fact not of complete but of partial cremation. In the 18th Sukta from

10th to 14th Mantras it is found again that there are the customs of complete burial: "*upa sarpa matam bhumime-tamuruvyachasam prthivim sucheyam*" etc. The fractional burial was also in vogue amongst the ancient vedic peoples. In the 14th Mantra of the 15th Sukta of the Rig Veda we find again: "*ye agnidagdha ye anagnidagdha*" etc. This no doubt indicates both the customs of cremation and burial.

6. * * * The early Buddhists held that there is no such thing as *soul in the sense* 'a permanent unchangeable entity.' Prof. Stcherbatsky: 'A personality (*pudgal*) in which other systems imagine the presence of a permanent spiritual principle, a soul (*Atman*), is in reality a bundle of elements or forces (*samskarasamuha*) It contains nothing permanent or substantial, it is *anatma*.' (*Conception of Nirvana*, p. 8). Instead of *Atta*¹ or *Atma* only the *shandha-santana* which has been compared to the flame of a lamp, is admitted by some of the schools of the Buddhist. They maintain a changing group of entities called the five *skandhas* which alone constitute a being regarded as *Atta* or soul. These *skandhas* may be of the grossest or the subtlest form, but they are in the continual flux of elements.

The philosophy of *Lankavatara* also explains this theory in the following manner: 'The Skandhas, Dhatus, and Ayatanas have nothing personal in them; there is no 'me and mine' in them * *. The material world as well as the physical body are manifestations of the mind known as *Alayavijnana*, and when they are discriminated as particular existences, we are discriminating our own mind. When thus created they are seen in constant transmigration, they never remain even for a moment as they are, they flow like a stream, they change like a seed, they flicker like a candle-light, they move like the wind or like a cloud. Owing to the habit-energy (*vasana*) * * we now transmigrate from one state to another revolving like a wheel, like a machine, like a phantom creation, or like a walking ghost.'—D. T. Suzuki: *Studies in the Lankavatara-Sutra*, p. 167.

7. * * * In the Avesta of the Parsees we find the words: *Astabanta* (*Astibat*) and *Manahya* (*Manasya*): i.e., the worlds, visible and invisible. There we also come across the word *Yima* (Sanskrit *Yama*), the son of *Bibingghat* (Sanskrit *Vaiivasvat*). According to the Avesta, the soul remains swooned

just after death. For continuous three days and nights, the soul begins to think of its deeds, good or bad, done during its life-time. The attachment for its nearest and dearest ones remains only for three days and nights, and after that it departs from there either for heaven or hell. We find in the Zend Avesta (Yast XII): Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: 'O Ahura Mazda, when one of the faithfuls departs from this life, where does his soul abide on that night?' Ahura Mazda answered: 'It takes its seat near the head singing the *Ushtavati Gatha*' etc. Vide Swami Abhedananda: *Great Saviours of the World*, (new edition), pp. 65-113.

8. * * * Dr. Inge says that transmigration or rebirth is incorrectly called 'metempsychosis.' He says that *Metempsychosis* or *Palingenesia* are the right words, since it is the bodies, not the soul that are changed to rebirth.—

9. * * * Except Pythagoras and Plato other celebrated Greek philosophers and historians maintained the same belief regarding it. As we find 'according to Herodotus (II. 123)', J. F. Clarke quotes, 'the soul must pass through all animals, fishes, insects, and birds, in short, must complete the whole circuit of animated existence, before it again enters the body of a man; and this circuit of the souls is performed in three thousand years.'—*The Great Religions*, p. 226.

Empedocles believed that the cause of transmigration was sin and the full terms of transmigration covered 30,000 years. But he said that finally the soul would become a god. This view more or less coincides with the paورانic theory of the Hindus. The Pauranic theory says that soul transmigrates from the lower to the higher births 84,00,000 times and ultimately returns to human form again. Pinder believed that only the bad were condemned to transmigration and the good went to the sky, the air, Elysium or Olympus. But 'Porphyry and Iamblichus,' as Dr. Inge reminds us, 'refuse to believe that human souls are ever sent to inhabit the bodies of beasts and birds.' 'The earliest Hermetic document, the *Kore Kosmou*, is dated probably to 510 B.C., and certainly within a century after that, by an allusion to the Persian rule.* * metempsychosis is assumed between human and animal bodies, the soul is individual, and at death it returns to its proper position in the sixty regions between the earth and moon. Thence it seems to have

been conducted to earth again for a reincarnation.'—Cf. W. M. Felindars Petric: *Aspects of Egyptian Religion*, (Oxford: *History of Religions*, Vol. I, p. 196): Most of the poets, philosophers and celebrated historians of ancient Greece believed in the existence and immortality of the human soul beyond grave. Erwin Rohde in his celebrated book *Psyche* has shown clearly how the cult of souls and the beliefs in the immortality of the soul were prevalent among the Dionysic Religion, the Orphics, the philosophers, and the poets in Greece of the glorious past days. Dr. Inge states: “* belief in immortality was less general in the first century than it is among ourselves, and decidedly less general than it became two hundred years later.*” the Romans were disposed to believe in some sort of shadowy survival, which justified family meetings at the grave and the customary tributes to the departed spirit.* But the belief in ghosts and apparitions* seems to have been almost universal in the second century, except among the ‘godless Epicureans’, Plutarch, Dion Cassius, the younger Pliny, and Suetonius all believed in spiritualism; and Neo-Platonism, with its doctrine of ‘daemonic’ did nothing to discourage it. The decay of Aristotelianism removed obstacles to free belief in immortality.*. The main doctrine of Orphism were the probation of the soul in this life as a preparation for eternity,* and the rebirth of souls in higher or lower forms, determined by the merits and demerits of the subject in its previous state of existence.’—(*Plotinus*, Vol. 1, pp. 52-53).

10. In the *Upanishads* we find the following passages which mention the retrogression of human souls to lower and animal bodies:

(i) “*Atha ya etau panthanau na viduste kitah patanga yadidam dandashukam.*”—(*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 6.2.16). That is, ‘those who do not know these two paths (*dakshinayana* and *uttarayana*) they become insects and moths, and these frequently biting things (gnats and mosquitoes).’

(ii) “*Tat ye iha ramaniyacharana abhyashoyatte ramaniyam yonmapaderan brahmanayonim va kshatriyayonim va vaisyayonim va atha ye iha kapuyacharana abhyashoyatte kapuyam yonimadpaderan shvayonim va shukarayonim va chandalayonim va.*”—(*Chhandogya Upanishad*, 5.10.7). This is, ‘those who have been of good conduct here would quickly

attain good birth—birth of Brahmana, birth of Kashatriya, or birth of Vaisya. And those who have been of bad conduct here attain evil birth,—the birth of a dog, the birth of a hog, or the birth of a Chandala.’

(iii) “*Yonimanye prapadyante sariratuwaya dehinah ; sthanumanye’ nuamyanti yathakarma yashashrutam.*”—(Katha Upanishad, 2.2.7). That is, ‘some souls according to their karma and inclination of mind receive another birth, and some other again are degenerated into the states of trees and stones.’

(iv) In the *Sankhayana Aranyaka* (Ch. II, 2) and *Kausitaki Brahmana Upanishad*, (1.1-6), we find it is mentioned: “* *chandramasastham yat pretyaha* * * *a iha kito va patango va shakunir va shardulo va simho va matsyo va parashva va* * * *pratyajoyate.*” That is, ‘those who depart from this world shall go to the moon. * * He is born on earth as a worm, or a grasshopper, or a fish, or a bird, or a lion, or a boar, or a snake, or a tiger, or a man, or another creature, in one or other station according to his deeds and his knowledge.’

11. * * * Grant Allen mentions: ‘It is the universal Catholic custom to place the relics of saints or martyrs under the altars in churches. Thus the body of St. Mark the evangelist lies under the high altar of St. Mark’s, at Venice ; and in every other Italian Cathedral, or Chapel, a reliquary is deposited within the altar itself. So well understood is this principle in the Latin Church that it has hardened into the saying, ‘No relic, no altar.’ The sacrifice of the Mass takes place at such an altar, and is performed by a priest in sacrificial robes. The entire Roman Catholic ritual is a ritual derived from the earlier sacerdotal ideas of ministry at an altar, and its connection with the primitive form is still kept up by the necessary presence of human remains in its holy places.

Furthermore, the very idea of a church itself is descended from the early Christian meeting-places in the catacombs or at the tombs of the martyrs, which are universally allowed to have been the primitive Christian altars. * * Thus Christianity is linked on to the very antique custom of worship at tombs, and habit of ancestor-worship by altars, relics, and invocation of saints, even revolutionary Protestantism still retaining some last faint marks of its origin in the dedication of churches to particular evangelists or martyrs, and in the more or less disguised

survival of altar, priesthood, sacrifice, and vestments.'—*The Evolution of the Idea of God*, pp. 24-26

12. * * * In the *Shraddha* ceremony of the Hindoos an effigy (*Brahmana*) made of Kusa-grass (*darbhamaya-Brahmana*) is placed and worshipped as an image or a representative of the dead. In the *Brishotsarga-shraddha* ceremony, there is used again a *Yupa* made of the *Vilva* tree which is called the *Brishakashtha* in the shape of a man or woman. This idol or the wooden post is preserved after the *Shraddha* ceremony is over as the symbol or image of the deceased.

We find again that there is current a custom of burning the effigy which is called the *paranaradaha* or *kusaputtalika* as a different kind of cremation ceremony of the Hindus. This ceremony is observed when the dead body of the deceased is not found. This effigy is made of 360 leaves of *palasa* or *sara* according to the *Suddhitattva*.

The similar custom is found in many other ancient nations of the world. Cf. Frazer: *Golden Bough*, p. IV, Vol. 1, pp. 250-259; Grant Allen: *Evolution of the Idea of God*, p. 94; R. M. Dorman: *The Origin of Primitive Superstitions*, p. 117; Dr. E. O. James: *Comparative Religion*, pp. 311-312; Elliot Smith: *Egyptian Mummies*, F. E. A., 1914, p. 192; A. W. Benn: *The Greek Philosopher*, p. 503; W. Budge: *Book of the Dead*. Ch. VI; L. A. Waddell: *Buddhism in Tibet or Lamaism*, p. 405.

13. * * * This statement of Swami Abhedananda reminds us two of the instances which we were privileged to hear from him. He said that when he was in America, he saw in one evening a face of a discarnate spirit floating in the air before him. The face of the spirit looked pale marked with pain and agony. The Swami asked the spirit: 'What ails you?' The voice came. 'Help me. Help me. I am suffering. I have committed suicide.' The Swami blessed him by saying. 'If you think my prayers and blessings will help you, you have my good wishes, I am praying for you. Peace be unto you.' The Swami saw that the pale and gloomy face of the spirit lighted up, who then melted away smiling. The other instance was of a spirit of a sailor who was drowned in the sea. He too appeared before him like one groping in darkness. The Swami asked him: 'What's wrong with you?' The spirit replied that he did not

know, he was drowned. He requested the Swami to help him. The Swami then prayed for him, and he melted away with his look bright and peaceful.

It will not be out of place to mention here again that Swami Abhedananda heard also the voice of his brother disciple Swami Adbhutananda (Latu Maharaj) immediately after his passing away in India. The Swami heard one day a heavy voice in the air: 'Kali Kali'. He immediately looked around, but found no body. He asked who he was, and the voice came: 'I am Latu. I have come to see you' The Swami apprehended the passing away of his beloved brother and it came to be true as he received the cablegram next day bearing the sad news of Swami Adbhutananda's demise.

The Swami also saw the materialized spirit of the Poet Girish Chandra Ghosh, who was spitting on all sides as he appeared. The explanation of that act of Girish Chandra was given by the Swami as: As we spit on a useless ephemeral thing, so the Poet being free from the bondage of his earthly body spat on the ephemeral worldly things, which bears no actual value or reality in comparison with the absolute existence.

—THE EDITOR.

APPENDIX F

EXTRACTS FROM THE SACRED WRITINGS OF THE ANCIENT HINDUS
AND THOSE OF THE MYSTICS, POETS AND PHILOSOPHERS, AS REGARDS
THE PRE-EXISTENCE AND IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL:

“O Agni, make warm that part of this deceased which is
birthless and eternal with thy heat. Let thy brightness and thy
flame make that part of his heated. O Jataveda Agni, take this
departed soul to the spheres of the pious and virtuous with thy
forms of welfare ”

—RIG VEDA, X, 16.4.

“This man has only two abodes, this and the next world ”
(4.3.9). “Exhausting the results of whatever work he did in
this life, he returns from that world to this for (fresh) work.”
Thus does the man who desires to transmigrate.” (4.4.6):

“The Self is taintless, beyond the (subtle) ether, birthless,
infinite and constant.” (4.4.20).

—BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD.

“Mortal is the body, held by death ;—it is the abode of that
Immortal (unbodied) Self. The bodied one is held by pleasure
and pain ; * * but pleasure and pain do not touch the unbodied
Self.”

—CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD.

“The soul must be a thing both uncreated and immortal * *
And then it is that a human soul passes into the life of a beast,
and from a beast who was once a man, the soul comes back into
a man again.’

—PLATO.

‘It (soul) is an absolute reality. * * is exists before ever it
belongs to a body.’

—PLOTINUS.

‘The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with
the body, but something of it remains which is eternal.’

—SPINOZA.

‘The soul is always joined with the aggregate of subordinate
Monads, though not always with the same ones * * not the soul

only, but every living thing is imperishable. * * Death is decrease and involution, birth increase and evolution. The dying creature takes only a portion of its bodily machine and returns to the slumberous or germinal condition of *evolution*, in which it existed before birth. * *. Pre-existence as well as post-existence must be conceded both to animals and men.'

—LEIBNITZ.

'The soul is indivisible, incorporeal, unextended, and it is consequently incorruptible. * * Such a being therefore is indissoluble by the force of nature ; that is to say, *the soul of man is naturally immortal.*'

—BERKELEY.

'Now, this endless progress (*progress ad infinitum*) is only possible on the supposition of an *endless* duration of the *existence* and personality of the same rational being (which is called the immortality of the soul). The *summum bonum*, then, practically is only possible on the supposition of the immortality of the soul.'

—IMMANUEL KANT.

'Man as Spirit is immortal, is an object of God's interest, is raised above finitude and dependence,* * that he has freedom to abstract himself from everything, and this implies that he can escape mortality.'

—HEGEL.

'The immortal *psyche* remains, with fettered pinions, fastened to the earth.'

'Death in Nature is Birth, and in Death itself appears visibly the exaltation of Life. There is no destructive principle in Nature, for Nature throughout is pure, unclouded Life ; * * Death and Birth are but the struggle of Life with itself to assume a more glorious and congenial form. * * and what mortals call Death is the visible appearance of this second Life * * Death is the ladder by which my spiritual vision rises to a new Life and a new Nature'

—FICHTE.

'The finite self is plainly a partial world, yet possesses within it the principle of infinity, taken in the sense of the *nesus* towards absolute unity and self-completion.'

—B. BOSANQUET.

'I communicate my view, not of course in order to convert any one to my opinion, but because I am convinced that a serious study of these phenomena is of the greatest importance to psychology, and because I think that my personal confession may lead a reader or two to approach the region of investigation which is usually treated with contempt by so-called men of science.'

—PROF. WILLIAM JAMES.

'We never become, for our own rational consciousness, perfect individual selves. Yet all our empirical life has meaning, and constitutes the life of one Self, just in so far, but only in so far, as this our empirical life is consciously viewed by ourselves as a process of progressing towards the fulfilment of our individual and consciously chosen ideal.'

—PROF. JOSIAH ROYCE.

'Any evidence which will prove immortality will also prove pre-existence. * * each of us exists through all time—past and future.'

'Human selves are among the fundamental differentiations of the universe, and that they are therefore, *sub specie temporis*, immortal.'

—DR. MACTAGGART.

'It is the spirit, it is Reality, in so far as it is truly real, in so far as it is unity of thought and willing; it is Life in so far as realized in its profundity as this unity itself; it is Freedom, if a reality so conceived be perpetual development, creation, progress.'

—B. CROCE.

'I do not hesitate to accept the spiritualistic theory. * * I only insist upon the application of scientific methods to the study and settlement of the great problems of immortality.'

—PROF. JAMES H. HYSLOP.

'Let us not forget that we here have to deal with a science of today and yesterday, which is still groping for its utensils, ways, methods, and aims, and that in the midst of a night which is darker than the earthly night, * * Most sciences have centuries of useless effort and barren uncertainty behind them, and

among the youngest of them there are probably few which promise such a harvest, even in the first stages—a harvest which may not correspond to what we believe ourselves to have sown, but which already shows many buds of a strange and unknown fruit.'

—MAETERLINCK.

'** it seems to me that the spiritualistic hypothesis may be mentioned with the same right as the other, for all discussions on it have not proved that it is untenable.'

—C. FLAMMARION.

'A life after death is not a matter of speculation or conjecture of hope and fear; it is a practical certainty which the individual has little dreams of doubting as he doubts the reality of his conscious existence.'

—J. G. FRAZER

'The burial customs of many peoples afford the best evidence that the disembodied soul is conceived as like in all essential respects to the living of soul and body. ** And the even more widely spread custom of burying or burning with the dead man his most valued possessions, especially weapons and ornaments, is due to the belief that even these things have their shadowy duplicates or ghost-souls, which can be carried away by the departing soul and used by it as the real objects, were used by the living man.'

—PROF. McDUGALL.

'The faith in immortality may be less widespread than the belief in a God, though this is doubtful.'

—PROF. PRATT.

'It (spirit) is a thin, unsubstantial human image, in its nature a sort of vapour, film, or shadow: ** continuing to exist and appear to men after the death of that body: able to enter into, possess, and act in the bodies of other men, of animals, and even of things.'

—PROF. TYLOR.

'The soul is not in time; time is rather in this soul. Values are eternal and indestructible. ** we are sure of our immortality.'

—DEAN INGE.

'What is true of our apprehension of the divine is true also of its counterpart in the creature—soul and spirit.'

—RUDOLF OTTO.

'The man who has let things pass away in their lower forms where they are mortal; receives them again in God, where alone they are real. All that is dead here, is life there. And all that is here gross and tangible is there (*sub specie ydeali*) spirit.'

MEISTER ECKHART.

'Death has no ower the immortal soul to slay,
That, when its present body turns to slay,
Seeks a fresh home, and with unlesened might,
Inspires another frame with life and light

* * * *

Death, so called, is not older matter tressed
In some new form. And in a varied vest,
From tenement to tenement though tossed.
The soul is still the same, the figure only lost.'

—DRYDEN.

'The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar.'

—W. WORDSWORTH.

'Support the fervour of the heavenly morn ?
No. No. The energy of life may be
Kept on after the grave, but not begun ;
And he who flagged not in the earhly strife,
From strength to strength advancing—only he,
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and the ardly, to eternal life.'

—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

- (a). Alas ; What is life, what is death,
What are we,
That when the ship sinks we no
longer may be
What to see thee no more, and to feel
thee no more,
To be after life what have been before.'

(b) 'The One remains, the many change and pass ;
 Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly ;
 Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
 Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
 Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
 If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek.'

—P. B. SHELLEY.

'For the journey is done and the summit attained,
 And the barriers fall,

* * * *

Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
 Then a light, then thy breast,
 O Thou Soul of my soul I shall clasp Thee again,
 And with God be the rest.'

—R. BROWNING.

'Form is born of that which is without form,
 And goes again, for *verily to Him do we return.*'

—AL-GHAZALI: *Masnavi*.

'Of my soul's union with this fleshly frame,
 Of life and death Thou art the end and aim.

* * * *

'The forms which clothe existence only stay
 One moment, in the next they pass away ;
 This subtle point is proven by the text ; *
Its fashion altereth from day to day'

—JIMT: *Lawa'th*.

* *Koran*. 1v. 29.

SCIENCE OF PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

PREFACE

Well has it been said by Swami Abhedananda, the direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna: "Those, who care for name, fame, and worldly prosperity may run after psychic powers and exercise them for their selfish motives ; but the true seekers after spiritual perfection never crave for them, but shun them as obstacles and source of bondage and self-delusion". The mystic Sadhaka Ramaprasad also sang: "Full many a gem (*mani*) is scattered in the courtyard of the Lord Chintamani", but the true lovers of God never hanker after them ; they strive only to see the Deity which is the main object of their unswerving love and devotion. The path to spiritual perfection is never smooth and easy-going, but from time to time there appear high hills of temptations as pseudo-gems of *siddhis*, or the psychic powers, which delude and mislead the individual souls. The real aspirants of divine Knowledge are never deluded by them.

The subconscious plane is a vast field, says Swami Abhedananda, as it "possesses unlimited powers and possibilities". It is the hidden storehouse of energy and power, and all powers that are manifested on the physical, mental, and spiritual planes, are different phases of the same unmanifested energy, lying latent in the subconscious or the unconscious. It is the subliminal self that creates destiny and character of all the individual souls. It is the perennial source that enables us to express thoughts and deeds in our daily run of life. It can be controlled and concentrated. It is completely mastered by the Yogis who practise for their eternal union with the infinite source of knowledge and bliss, nay, for the divine realization of the Absolute. By their ceaseless and sincere *sadhana* or spiritual practices they can draw out all the powers lying latent below the threshold of the subconscious plane of the mind. But these powers are scattered gems and pearls in the courtyard of the Divine Lord, as has been said before, and so they never help us to enter into the inner sanctuary of Chintamani, the Lord of the universe. "It is for this reason", says the Swami, "Jesus the Christ, Buddha, Ramakrishna, and other spiritual leaders of mankind forbade their disciples to make any demons-

tration of psychic power or psychic phenomena, but taught them to obey the true spiritual laws by rising above the psychic nature”.

Swami Abhedananda warns us always not to give any response to the alluring call of our selfish motives and petty desires and also not to run after the will-o'-the-wisp of the psychic phenomena, but instructs and inspires us to overcome and transcend them with our triumphant march towards the realization of the absolute consciousness. He says that it is our goal of life to immortalize ourselves with the ‘radiance of Eternity’, and not to make ourselves the ‘men of the cave’ which is no other than the den of delusion. It is the Blessedness alone that can remove the cares and anxieties of the deceitful world and that can console us with the blessings of the tranquil peace and the everlasting happiness.

We should remember the words of the Swami: “The secret chamber of the soul of an ordinary man or woman is packed up from the ceiling to the floor with thoughts and ideas that are worldly, and also with desires and happiness of the flesh; and still we wonder why God does not come to us, why we have not attained the Godconsciousness” (*Path of Realization*). So, “there must be”, as Eckhart says, “perfect stillness in the soul before God can whisper His word into it, * *. When all passions are stilled and all worldly desires are silenced, the word of God can be heard in the soul”.

The spiritual perfection is the be-all and end-all of the human life. The charms of the psychic phenomena are frail and fleeting to those who sincerely aspire to drink deep the nectar of Heaven and Immortality. So we should not be mad to run after them, but should raise ourselves to the limitless height of perfect wisdom and eternal freedom.

This volume contains five illuminating lectures on the *Science of Psychic Phenomena*, delivered in America, and they march with an array of historical and experimented facts, skilfully treated with the philosophical and scientific thoughts. The Swami thus deals with his subject in the Chapter I, showing that the psychic forces are submerged under the threshold of the subconscious mind. They are like the waves of different sizes that rise from the bottom to the conscious plane, and play the miracles of the wonderful powers. These powers originally

exist in the universe, and pervade the whole field of it. And they are not extra-ordinary ones, but appear as such, because we do not know their real nature and source. Naturally they remain with us as obscure and unknown, and so we take them as wonders. The Swami has wisely explained all the phases of those powers, such as, hypnotism, telepathy or thought-transference, mind-reading, clairvoyance, clairaudience, and other marvellous psychic phenomena with the spirit of a true scientist. He says that these powers can be achieved and be mastered by the systematic yogic practices. The *Patanjala* and other systems of Yoga of India deal with them and say that they are the inherent powers of the mind. They bring only material prosperity and success, but fail to bring unto us the deliverance and the heavenly peace.

In the Chapter II, Swami Abhedananda deals skilfully with the *Prana and the Healing Power*. He says that the human mind is nothing but "a continued adaptation to environments. * * The more perfect the adaptations, the more perfect is the manifestation of life". The law of adaptation is not mechanical or chemical, but is what we call the manifestation of the life-force, or the vital energy. Everything in this universe is governed by this inevitable or inscrutable law, and the violation of this law brings disorder in the physique (body) and the psyche (mind). It also creates ill-health, diseases, and similar disturbances. The life-force or *Prana* is the prime mover of the mind. It is also the sustainer and preserver of the organism of the universe. So if any one can control this life-force which is known as the vital energy, he becomes the master of the body and the mind, nay, he becomes the master of the whole universe.

The Chapter III deals with the *Magnetic Healing*. The magnetic healing is also the power of the *Prana*. In this lecture, Swami Abhedananda narrates two of the striking incidents of the magnetic healing power of his great Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa; one is that of curing the headache of Swami Vivekananda, and the other is that of removing the appetite of some of the Master's disciples.

The Chapter IV deals with three lectures: (1) *Science of Mental Healing*, (2) *Spiritual Healing*, and (3) *Healing by Discarnate Spirit*. In the first lecture, the Swami shows the

intimate relation between the body and the mind. In it, he refutes all the prevailing materialistic theories which view that life and mind "are the results of material forces and chemical actions of matter. * * Consciousness is the result of the activity of the brain cells". The Swami says that "every mental function produces the corresponding physical changes in the system". The mental suggestion produces some wonderful effects upon the physical body. He gives two illustrations about it: one is of a girl who was cured by mere suggestion in her hypnotic sleep, and the other, of a man who fell a victim to death by the mental suggestion. The close study of the latent powers of the mind and its exercise can cure all diseases and ailments. The Swami also forwards here a statement of his personal experience about the curing of the mountain-sickness by the power of the mind. He shows that every organ of our organism has been created as the outcome of our desires. The mental healing is a natural power and not an extraordinary one

In the second lecture, Swami Abhedananda says that "all the spiritual healing is produced by the individual self" when he reaches the highest stage of spiritual progress. This science of spiritual healing covers various methods of the healing, such as, regulating the body and the mind, the physical movements, and the correct breathing. It contains the *negative* and the *affirmative* methods. There is another kind of healing which is known as the *metaphysical method*. He states how he cured the fractured fibula of his own right leg by mental suggestion, when he was in the Vedanta Ashrama at West Cornwall, Connecticut. He also says that before healing others, we shall acquire the power of self-healing first.

The third lecture of the Swami shows how the disembodied spirits possess the healing power. He says that the "prayer is another method, by which healing can be done". He lays stress upon the right faith and discards the blind one. He concludes by saying: "Science of the spiritual healing thus explains the power of the spirit over the mind and the matter, and that each living soul, being the image or reflection of the divine Spirit, is the true healer within us".

The Chapter V gives a masterly exposition-cum-interpretation of the *Science of Perfect Health*. In it, Swami Abhedananda shows that "perfect health is the firm and sure root of success,

prosperity, fulfilment of desires, and freedom of the soul". He says that the body is the temple of God, and the body is the instrument, by which men can have the spiritual achievement. He refutes all the materialistic arguments, regarding the soul and consciousness. He condemns the unjust and queer criticisms of the Christian missionaries and the so-called apostles of Western civilization who ridicule the custom and the sanitary laws of the Hindus of India. He says: "They (Christian missionaries) condemned this custom and called the Hindus heathen idolators and worshippers of cows. With a loud noise they tried to civilize them, by converting them into their own faith. But now those heathen customs are adopted in civilized America".

Swami Abhedananda says: "In India, religion was brought into every phase of life". The people of India eat religion, drink religion, sleep religion, talk religion, and dream religion. Religion is their laws of life, and they apply and use religion in all the spheres of their lives. Constant thought of the material objects drags the soul down on the plane of the gross matter, and the Swami calls this 'thought' as the 'attachment' or delusion that compels us 'to mistake the body for the soul and matter for spirit'. So he instructs us to strike off the fetters of the earthly attachments and to seek God, the unchangeable Reality amidst the continual changes of the world. He says that it is the body that suffers from cold or diseases, and not does the soul. The soul is diseaseless and deathless. Still the body should not be overlooked and ignored, as it is the best means for achieving the highest goal of human life. The robust body, or the sound health, is necessary to enjoy the blessings of the peaceful life, and this "is to be found, when one does not think of the body, and when one does not feel its existence in particular". The treatment of such an abstruse subject has been made clear by Swami Abhedananda with a critical and keen sense of judgment in a clear and lucid style. The readers, familiar with the works of the Swami, will see in these pages the firm imprints of scholarship, intellectuality, and spiritual excellence, along with a comprehensive view of a master mind. His wonderful argumentativeness and clear insight bear testimony to the fact that he himself knows how to unveil the mystery of the world as well as of the psychic

phenomena. So he has got every right to deal with this difficult subject and to show the path of emancipation to them, who are carried away by the flood-waves of charms of the psychic phenomena.

The appendix, *Science of Mystery* discloses the fact that everything of the universe remained unmanifested in the beginningless past in the womb of the primordial energy or the *Prakriti*, and when evolution is required, everything appears in material form, and again in involution, everything manifested goes back to the causal state. Therefore nothing is lost. The world of change is impermanent, but amidst the changes, there is an unchanging substance which is known as the *Atman*, or the Brahman. The *Atman* forms the ground as well as the cause of the universe, but from the non-dualistic standpoint the *Atman* is not the ground and the cause of the world-appearance, but for the nescience or *maya*, evolution and involution (*srishti* and *pralaya*) happen. The Swami instructs all to take shelter in the *Atman* which is immortal and self-shining for regaining the immortal nature of them.

SWAMI PRAJÑANANANDA

CONTENTS

PREFACE

CHAPTER I

THE PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

The power of Jesus—The psychic powers are universal—The same forces operate everywhere—All mental powers exist in the Cosmic Mind—The subconscious plane is a much larger field—The extraordinary powers—The geniuses and prodigies—The power of telepathy—The mind of a psychic Yogi is free—The power of clairaudience and psychometry—The disintegration of personality—Personality and individuality—The soul is sexless—The power of telekinesis—The power of mental healing—What does *siddhi* mean—Powers in the ordinary men and the Yogis—A Yogi becomes the master of the psychic realm—The powers of a psychic Yogi—Who is a psychic Yogi—Psychic powers are not desirable says the Raja Yoga—Psychic phenomena are not the signs of spiritual progress or Good-vision—The story of a young Yogi who attained to *siddhi* or *siddhai*—Worldly men run after the psychic powers—The great spiritual leaders forbade their disciples not to demonstrate any psychic powers—He is truly spiritual who wishes to rise above nature.

CHAPTER II

THE PRANA AND THE HEALING POWER

Our earthly life consists in a continued adaptation to environments—The law of adaptation is the life-force—What do we mean by health—Disease is not a real entity—An abundance of life-force is necessary—The healing power that manifests in human minds—The science of Yoga and the *prana*—The nerve-centres in the spine are the storehouse of the *prana* or life-force—The secret of magnetic healing—What a true Yogi claims—A Yogi can cure diseases—In order to cure diseases, we must wield a tremendous will-power—The *prana* produces the will-power.

CHAPTER III

THE MAGNETIC HEALING

Personal magnetism is the expression of the same *prana* or life-force—The miraculous powers of the Yogis—How Sri Ramakrishna cured the headache of Swami Vivekananda—Sri Ramakrishna removed the appetite of some of his disciples—Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

CHAPTER IV

(I)

SCIENCE OF MENTAL HEALING

Relation between mind and body—The materialistic thinkers regarding the soul and consciousness—What the medical practitioners say about the mind—Dr. Maudsley, Dr. Foster, Dr. Hammond, Prof. Angelo Mosso and others about the mind—Dr. Thompson and a post-mortem case—Mental changes produce corresponding physical changes—Worry breaks down the nerves—A girl was cured by suggestion—The power of suggestion—Doctor Wiggs and a girl—The mind and its power—How the author cured his own mountain-sickness by mental power—The mind is the creator of the world—Memory and the mind—Mental healing includes the healing by the power of suggestion—The healing powers played by great teachers—The Buddhist monks practised various methods of mental healing—Sir E. A. Wallis Budge about the Buddhist missionaries—Plants have life—The mental healing is a natural power.

(II)

THE SPIRITUAL HEALING

There is a plane of consciousness—Henry Wood regarding psychic science—All spiritual healing is produced by the individual self—True Self is all-knowing and all-powerful—Common sense is the best sense—Adoption of negative method of healing—What is negative method—The positive method—Dogmatic faith brings the receptive attitude of the mind—The spiritual methods of *affirming* and *denying*—Curing of the author's own

fractured *fibula* of the leg by suggestion—Self-healing should be practised—Right discrimination—The method of *visualization*.

(III)

HEALING BY DISCARNATE SPIRIT

The mind of a discarnate spirit can influence our mind—The spiritualists of all countries—Right and blind faiths—The prayer is another method—The old lady who prayed for the mountain to move away—Earnest prayer with strong desire—Faith-healers—The science of healing includes all the various methods—What Vedanta says—The science of healing explains the power of the spirit.

CHAPTER V

SCIENCE OF PERFECT HEALTH

Perfect health is the root of success—Most of the scientific men believe in the materialistic theory—Diseases arise from physical and physiological conditions—What do the recent scientific investigations prove—Hygienists and dietists regarding diseases—Food is divided into five classes—Rev. Dr. Talmage on health—The combination of the food-stuff—Some extremists regarding food and diseases—Continuous fasting is injurious—Perfect health—J. J. Walsh on fasting—Every part of the system breathes—Correct food—Prof. Schenk—Hygienic laws—In India religion was brought into every phase of life—Socrates regarding body and mind—What do we mean by disease—We cannot deny the power of *prana*—*Prana* governs the subtle and gross bodies—Who is a true physician—What should do the medical practitioners—Constant thoughts of material object drag the soul down—Who does catch cold—True sign of perfect health—Perfect health is not the ideal of spirituality—The Yogis of India and perfect health—What is spiritual perfection—The Hindu medical science and health—Diseases are divided into four classes—The violation of hygienic laws—How to acquire perfect health—How to purify body and mind—Mind has the power to cure diseases—Self-demonstration of health—Health is not ultimate ideal—The state of *jivanmukti*—The soul that has realized absolute liberation.

APPENDIX

SCIENCE OF MYSTERY

The province of this science is to explain the mysteries of life and death—It describes the finer forces of nature—Something cannot come out of nothing—Everything in the beginningless past remained in an unmanifested form—In the time of evolution, everything is manifested—The *prana* is the vital force and the life is infused in everything—This *prana* or vital power is also created by the *Atman*—The *Atman* should be taken as a shelter for attaining the eternal peace.

CHAPTER I

THE PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

Jesus the Christ manifested a great many wonderful powers like walking on the sea, opening the eyes of the blind, curing diseases, and so on. All these powers have also been manifested by other great saviours of the world. These powers are universal. One may claim that they belong to one particular manifestation alone and not to others, but, in fact, in our present day, we find that many enlightened minds possess the similar powers.

Whatever power exists in the macrocosm, exists also in the microcosm. The same forces which operate in the physical nature, also manifest themselves through the body of a human being. The forces of nature that move the world, such as the power of attraction, gravitation, heat, light, motion, electricity, etc. are also operating through the microcosmic body of a human being ; the difference between them lies only in degree, as on the physical plane, so on the psychical plane. The mental powers which have been from time immemorial exhibited on the human plane of existence, demonstrate the fact that these powers also exist in the cosmic or universal mind, only in an infinitely larger proportion. All mental powers which human mind manifests, proceed from the cosmic mind which is the storehouse of the infinite powers and the infinite phenomena, and which forms the background of individual minds. The individual minds may be called the eddies in that eternal current of the cosmic mind, or the universal mind. The current of the universal mind has been constantly flowing from eternity to eternity, producing an infinite number of eddies or individual minds and generating the waves of different sizes and dimensions which are known as mental functions, or the psychic phenomena. These waves, rising from the subconscious plane, reach the plane of consciousness, then go down again below the threshold and remain merged in that realm of the subconscious mind. The subliminal or subconscious mind is much larger than the portions of which we are conscious. The life of an

ordinary man or woman represents only the commonest powers of the mind substance, such as thinking, willing, reasoning, discriminating, feeling, and so on. But these powers we do not consider as wonderful although they are equally marvellous, because we find them almost everywhere.

If we trace the origin or the process of reasoning or thinking, we shall find that it is the most wonderful power that exists in the universe, but still we do not pay any attention to it and we do not call it marvellous or super-normal, because we consider it as a natural property of the human mortals. But whenever we find any extraordinary manifestation of any of these powers, we look at it with great admiration, awe, and reverence. Those who manifest such extraordinary powers, are known as the geniuses and the prodigies. We recognize them and adore them on account of their powers, because they are uncommon and we do not find them in our ordinary daily lives. The tendency of the human mind is to recognize and value that which is rare and uncommon, and for this reason we admire the geniuses and the prodigies. They possess a certain power, something that makes them shine over the heads of the multitude, and, therefore, we look at them with admiration and wonder. They are like the gems in the midst of ordinary stones. But these great geniuses display their powers in different planes, such as, in art, in science, in morality, in spirituality, and in other fields of the human genius. What a musical prodigy or genius can do, may be impossible for a prodigy in the mathematical calculation. What Mozart did, could not have been done by Pascal, and what Pascal did, could not have been possible for Mangiamelo, the son of the Sicilian peasant, who was never taught any mathematics, but who was just like a mathematical machine. There are many other instances of such prodigies and geniuses who display the unusual powers of the subconscious mind on the intellectual and the artistic planes. So there are many wonderful prodigies in various departments of the psychic field. There are hypnotists who possess the wonderful powers. They may be considered as the geniuses, but we do not recognize them as such. We limit the terms, genius and prodigy to a certain class of the individuals.

Like hypnotism, telepathy, or thought-transference, mind-reading, clairvoyance, and clairaudience are the marvellous

psychic phenomena. We can now understand telepathy better by studying the process of the wireless telegraphy. If you have a transmitter and a receiver, then the message can be sent, but they must be on the same plane of vibration.

I have described that human minds are like the eddies in that one eternal current of the cosmic mind. Therefore they are connected, and that connection is made apparent when telepathy or thought-transference is practised. You can see it in one room and a friend in another, and then if you have a certain thought and your friend be *enrapport* with yourself or your mind, you will receive the message. We must not forget that there are three spaces: physical, mental, and spiritual. So the physical space is not the only space. There are also a mental space and a spiritual space. The spiritual space is higher than the mental space, and mental space is behind the physical space. So message can be sent on the mental space and can be received.

Telepathy is possible at a great distance. Your friend may be in Europe, in India, or on the other side of the earth, and yet you can send a message, and can receive one. The thought-vibrations run more quickly than any other known power of vibration. They are quicker than electricity. Therefore it is said that the mind can go anywhere, to the sun, to the moon, and to all directions through infinite space in no time. These powers show that the mind can see and hear and smell at a great distance. Ordinarily our minds are engaged within the limits of the sense organs and the sense powers. We depend for our perceptions upon these organs or senses, but not with the psychic, as it is different. A psychic does not depend on the sense powers and the sense organs. The mind of the psychic is free, emancipated, and liberated from the slavery to the senses. His mind is also released from the organs. But those who are living on the sense plane, depending upon the sense powers, do not realize that mind is the seer and the hearer. They think that the body is absolutely necessary for the perception of the objects, just as an ordinary person who does not know anything about the wireless telegraphy, will consider that a dynamo, electric wires, and other apparatuses are absolutely necessary for sending a message; but those who understand the atmospheric electricity, will not be limited by those conditions.

Similarly, those who possess the psychic powers like clairvoyance, will understand how the mind can see, hear, and smell from a distance.¹

The power of clairaudience is also wonderful. We all know the remarkable psychic power of Joan of Arc. She heard a voice saying that there was a sword behind the altar. It was true, and she got that sword. Socrates used to hear the psychic voices. So there are many living instances where these powers of clairaudience have been manifested.

Psychometry is another psychic power. By psychometry, a person can read a sealed letter, and describe the physical condition and the character of the writer. I know of an instance in New York of a psychometrist, on whose forehead I held a sealed letter and that person described exactly the physical body, the dress, and everything concerning the writer. These things come in the form of visions. When a seer holds a letter on the forehead, he first sees the writer and afterwards the writing. A psychometrist, at one time, held a piece of stone in her hand and in a vision, she saw the villa of Cicero, the nature of which was entirely unknown to her. She did not even know that the piece of stone was brought from the villa of Cicero, and she described exactly from which spot or corner it was taken, and so on.

There are other powers which are manifested by the persons of abnormal disposition. Sometimes amongst the insane persons you will find the development of some psychic powers. One of the most remarkable psychic phenomena is disintegration of personality, as found in a trance condition. The personality disintegrates and divides itself and then the personality vanishes. Sometimes you find in a certain person a plurality of personality.² Thus, at one time, the person behaves like one person, and at another time, like an entirely different individual. The other day, I was reading about a girl who had ten personalities and had created a great sensation in England. But these different personalities are only different manifestations or expressions of the latent impressions that are dormant in the subconscious mind, or the subliminal self. When they rise above the threshold and appear on the conscious plane,

¹ Vide Swami Abhedananda: *True Psychology*.

² Cf. S. Abhedananda: *True Psychology*.

they manifest themselves in different individuals. But we must not think that ten souls take possession of that girl. But it is the same person or the same individual soul who possesses these powers and different personalities, because personality is nothing but a kind of garment or a clothing. It is a thinner and finer psychic garment of the soul. Personality, being ever-changing, is not eternal; but the individual self is eternal. The individual self is, in reality, the *Atman*, and so it is deathless and eternal. But people make a great mistake as regards personality and individuality of the soul. The word 'personality' comes from the Latin word *persona*, which means 'mask', i.e. 'the covering'. The first covering of the soul is the thought-body which we call the subtle body (*sukshma-sharira*). That may change; you may throw away one subtle body and take another, as in a dream you can take an entirely different personality. A man may become a man or woman in a dream, but all these are the uprising or uprush of the latent impressions of the sub-conscious mind. So our present personality will not last for ever. We need not fret about it. Again the soul is sexless. Some people ignorantly think that they are male or female, and shall remain like this for ever. But that is not so. The soul can take a male or female form. Of course, there is a law which governs it, or there is a law of predominance of certain powers and desires that determines our sexes, but the soul itself, or the mind itself is sexless.

Then telekinesis is another remarkable psychic power. It means the power of moving the heavy bodies. At one time I was the guest of a friend, a doctor in Boston, who possesses this unusual power. There was a heavy and old-fashioned dining table, and three or four persons could not lift it. After dinner he called me to sit with him at the same table. So I sat down, while he put his hands on the table and asked me to do the same. There was no one else present except his wife. She stood at a distance, and we two sat at the head of the table, and put our hands on the table. After a short time, the table began to crack, and I looked at him. He was perfectly self-possessed, and was talking with me. He said: 'Do you see this?' I said: 'Yes, what is it?' He said: 'The table is coming apart'.³ And

³ C. Flammarion also says: 'I have so often seen a rather heavy table lifted to a height of eight, twelve, sixteen inches from the floor, and I

when that noise stopped, the table began to move all around and came so fast towards us that we were finally pushed against the wall, and there we stopped. My friend is a well-known physician. He does not believe in spiritualism or the possession by the spirits, but still he has this power. He asked me how I could explain it. I said that it is the power of the *prana*, and that power of the *prana* can move the world. It is moving the world. It is everywhere, and when it is manifested by any particular instrument of the human body, it can do wonders.⁴

The power of the mental healing is another great psychic power, and we know that this power is demonstrated scientifically by men and women of different countries. In fact, the Faith-healers, Mental healers, Christian Scientists, Divine healers, and all other kinds of healers manipulate the same kind of power, and cure diseases. The mind can create diseases, and all those diseases⁵ which can be created by the mind, can also be cured by the mind. It is a fact that you can get a blister on your skin if you can concentrate upon any particular spot. You know of the stigma that St. Francis d'Assisi and many others had. That was not by the grace of Jesus the Christ, but anybody can get them by concentration. In olden times, we did not understand the mental powers, and we thought that these powers came directly from the heaven. But now we know that they are the powers of the subliminal self, or of the subconscious mind. These psychic powers have been exhibited in India from the very ancient times. They have been studied carefully and have been developed into a science. They are called in Sanskrit the *siddhis*.⁶ The *siddhi* means the accomplishment on the psychic plane, and a person who possesses these powers is called the possessor of the *siddhai*. These may be possessed by a man, or by a woman.

Those, who have read the philosophy of Patanjali, will remember that, in the aphorisms of its third chapter, various powers and psychic phenomena are described, and these powers

have taken such undeniably authentic photographs of these ; * * '—Cf. *Mysterious Psychic Forces*, p. 5.

⁴ Cf. Swami Abhedananda. *True Psychology*, p. 56

⁵ That is, by the mental suggestion

⁶ The *siddhi* is also known by the name of *siddhai* or *vibhuti*, which means the psychic power.

can be attained by the psychic Yogis. There are some, of course, who are born with certain psychic powers, fully developed, while with others, these powers are latent. Science of the Raja Yoga claims that these powers are latent in all the human beings. Everyone possesses them, because these powers belong to the cosmic or subconscious mind, or whatever you may call it. Our mind and our bodies are merely the channels through which these powers manifest.

In ordinary individuals, these powers are not manifested, because to them the door is closed. But anyone who wishes to develop these powers, can do so by going through certain exercises and by following the instructions of a psychic Yogi and also by practising those instructions faithfully. A psychic Yogi says that the power of concentration is the key to the realm of the psychic phenomena. We know very little of this power of concentration; we are not ordinarily conscious of this concentrated force of the mind substance. It will create wonders, and any person who possesses this power of concentration, fully developed, can easily become the absolute master of the psychic realm, and can bring all other forces of nature under control, and make them obey him as their lord and master. A psychic Yogi can know his past and future. He can read the past events of one's life, and prognosticate the future. Of course, it is a very unusual thing, and when this power is manifested in a man, we call him a prophet. There have been many such prophets, and so no particular religion can claim that it alone has produced the prophets and that no other religion has. You go to the Mohammedans and ask them how many prophets they had. You go amongst the Buddhists, the Hindus, the Chinese and the Tibetans, and you will find that each of these nations has produced a great many prophets. We do not know of them, because we have not read their history. Again we do not care to read, as we are busy with our own affairs. But a comparative study of religions will show that every nation or religion has produced a great many prophets. There are living prophets, and in every age, we find such great psychic Yogis.

A psychic Yogi can understand the meaning of the sounds of the wild animals who have a language of their own. Those who have read Rudyard Kipling's *Second Jungle Book*, will

remember the most remarkable instance of the psychic Yogi, named Puran Bhagat. He was a great official at one time, and then renounced everything, and went to live in a cave in the Himalayas. At one time, he met a wild deer, heard the sound of that deer, understood its meaning, and, in consequence, saved the lives of the sleeping population of a whole village in the Himalayas from an immediate, terrible, and most destructive landslide which wiped out the whole village in a few minutes. In the middle of the night, he went to the village on hearing the sound of the deer, awakened the sleeping population, and thus saved their lives, and the deer was the cause of it. So you see that what we cannot understand on account of our limitations, can be noticed by the wild animals instinctively, and that instinct is nothing but the power of the subconscious mind. The lower animals have minds; they have feelings, and they have also the subconscious mind, and sometimes knowing beforehand what is going to happen, they get frightened, when we do not. There are many other instances of such psychic phenomena in India.

A psychic Yogi can make himself disappear in the midst of a crowd in broad daylight. This is one of the powers which you do not ordinarily find. There have been several instances of such psychic Yogis who have disappeared from close confinement, under constant watch, and appeared elsewhere outside of the room. They can make their bodies, as they claim, like the cotton-wool, and pass through the space. It seems absurd, but they claim that they can do it. A psychic Yogi can know and state exactly the hour and the minute, when he will pass out of his body, and can prove it by experiment. I heard of several instances of the psychic Yogis who announced that they would pass out of the body on such a day at such an hour. They were in perfect health. But they invited their friends, gave away all the things that they wished to distribute, fed their guests, prepared their own coffins, told where they wanted to be buried, and exactly at the hour stated passed out of the body. In fact, these psychic Yogis can die at any time they want. They know the process of death, and they also know how a Yogi can get out of the body with full consciousness. Then the psychic Yogi can communicate with the discarnate spirits, and bring them under control. A spiritualist is under

huge and extremely heavy. Five or ten persons cannot lift them. By still another power a psychic Yogi gets whatever he wishes, controls whatever he wants, makes the laws of nature obey his commands, and fulfils his desires by his will-power. We often hear of the allegorical story of a man, sitting under the tree of the fulfilment of desires, which, they say, is in heaven. He wished for certain things that he might have the delicious dishes of an emperor and many attendants to serve him. His desires were fulfilled and all those delicious dishes appeared before him, and he ate of them. Then he wished for the girls to come to play music and to entertain him, and so the damsels appeared. But, as he was enjoying them, it flashed through his mind that if at that time a tiger came, it would be good, and immediately a tiger would come and swallow him. This shows that whatever we desire, we get ; and, in a certain state, a Yogi can fulfil his desires by his will.

In describing these psychic powers, the Raja Yoga says that they are not desirable. Although the psychic Yogi is free from diseases and pains, he can live as long as he wishes, and is not subject to death. The Raja Yoga states that these powers are the obstacles in the path of spirituality. According to the Raja Yoga, the phenomena are not the signs of spiritual progress or the God-vision, but it is a progress on the psychic plane. There are a great many instances, in India, of those who possess the psychic powers. One of them is this: a young man who was very anxious to possess certain psychic powers, left his home, parents and brothers, and went out in the forest in search of a psychic Yogi. After a long time he discovered one. In India, of course, we have many large forests, and people who develop these powers, seek a secluded place where they can go and stay undisturbed and practise the Yoga *sadhana*. So this young man went to the Yogi, became his disciple, and lived with him for fourteen years, following his instructions very closely and practising exactly as he was told. One day, he went to bathe in a river, and suddenly discovered to his great amazement that he did not sink and that he could walk on water. He told his master who was very much pleased to see that his disciple had accomplished something. Then the disciple thought that he gained exactly what he had wanted, and he wished to make a show of it. So he left his master, and came home to surprise his

brother who asked him to show what he had gained. He said: "Brother, come with me to the river-side, and I will show you what I have gained". When they went, this young psychic Yogi showed his brother the power by walking over the surface of the water of the river. In the meantime, his brother took a ferry-boat and went on the other side by paying a penny. Then, when they reached the other shore, the brother asked this young psychic Yogi: "My dear brother, how did you acquire this wonderful power?" His brother answered. "Why, I have gone through tremendous hardship and privations and I have practised for fourteen years without eating or drinking much and without sleeping." Then his brother, who had a little common-sense, said: "What a pity! You have spent so much time and energy and have gone through so much trouble to get that which is worth a penny! How foolish you have been."

The psychic powers are glorified by those who are on the plane of worldliness. They are great powers in the eyes of the world. The worldly people admire and run after them, but the great spiritual teachers do not care for them. On the contrary, the spiritual teachers consider them as the great obstacles in the path of spirituality. They do not deny their existence. They admit it, but at the same time they say that if you pay attention to these powers, you will not rise on the higher plane of the Godconsciousness, and you will remain confined within the psychic realm. It is for this reason, Jesus the Christ, Buddha, Ramakrishna, and other great spiritual leaders of mankind forbade their disciples to make any demonstration of psychic powers or phenomena, but taught them to obey the true spiritual laws by rising above the psychic nature.

Those who look for name, fame, and worldly prosperity, may run after psychic powers, and exercise them for their selfish motives, but the true seekers after spiritual perfection never crave for them, but shun them as obstacles as well as the source of bondage and self-delusion. He is truly spiritual who wishes to rise above nature and who transcends all the psychic powers, and struggles hard to enter into the realm of Divinity which is beyond the plane of the psychic phenomena.

¹ Cf. Swami Abhedananda *True Psychology*, pp 67-68.

CHAPTER II

THE PRANA AND THE HEALING POWER

Our earthly life consists in a continued adaptation to environments. A living substance is that which is capable of adapting itself to its surroundings, and the very moment when it completely fails to do so, it is dead. The more perfect the adaptation, the more perfect is the manifestation of life. All vegetable, animal and human lives are subject to this great law of adaptation. This law manifests itself and governs every step of existence, growth, evolution, and development of a living creature. That power, by which an organism can adapt itself to its environments, is not a mechanical power and not merely a chemical force, but is what we understand by the word 'life-force' or 'vital energy'. Wherever there is manifestation of this life-force, there is a natural tendency to bring a perfect harmony with the surrounding condition as well as with the laws that govern them. This tendency is to be found in all the living beings and also in every department of nature, whether vegetable, animal or human. Therefore the fulfilment of this tendency and the establishment of a perfect harmony with environment and obedience to the natural laws are implied in the meaning of adaptation, and these are the products of the life-force, or the vital energy.

The normal manifestation of the life-force under favourable environments, creating perfect harmony with them and obeying the laws that govern them, is the state which is ordinarily understood by the common expression, *health*. In other words, *health* means the life under natural condition where the law of adaptation and other laws that govern the environments, are not violated in the least. But, if these laws be violated and the conditions be abnormal, and, if the adaptation be imperfect, then the result will be lack of health or that state which is meant by such expressions as ill-health, sickness, or disease—all of which mean lack of health. Disease is not a real entity, which stands outside of ourselves as the enemy of health, and attacks us from time to time as some people may think, but it is simply

an imperfect manifestation of the life-force under abnormal conditions. It does not take possession of us from outside, but it is produced by the inability of the life-force to adapt itself to its environments and to obey the laws of nature. In order to adapt ourselves to our surrounding conditions, whether internal or external, we need a certain amount of energy and force, and when that amount decreases, either by waste or dissipation, or by lack of proper nourishment, or by the violation of the hygienic laws, we grow weak and, consequently, become unable to resist the environmental influences which are constantly working against the earthly existence, and are trying to crush it. Then we succumb under pressure, and become subject to various ailments. As for example, when the temperature of the atmosphere is low, if we cannot adapt ourselves to that external change by getting enough of warmth, our system will be affected and we shall catch cold, or be frozen. If the food be too rich or unwholesome, our system will do its best to assimilate it; but if it fails, the result will be indigestion. If water which we drink, contains the germs or impure substances, they will enter into our system and try to dwell there and produce various symptoms of abnormal conditions which our system will naturally struggle to throw off to recover its normal condition.

If there be enough of life-force, the organs will destroy all the germs of diseases and all the microbes and bacteria which are constantly entering into our bodies through breath, food, and drink as well as through the pores of the skin, attacking the cells and the tissues. An abundance of life-force is necessary to resist their influences, or to drive them away, or to kill them, and eventually bring back the normal condition which we understand as health. No disease can arise in the system if there be a sufficient amount of life-force and if the cells are able to resist the influences of the common environments. The life-force has the primary tendency to preserve itself. This tendency for self-preservation is manifested not only by the individual being, but also by every organ and every tissue, nay, by every minute cell of the whole organism. Propelled by this force, each cell acts instinctively, as it were, to protect its normal or healthy state and to remove all such obstacles as stand in its way. If any part of the body be wounded or injured, immediate-

ly the minute cells, which are floating in the blood, begin to work with an extra force to remove that obstacle, to attack that enemy and to recover the normal state of that part. As in a bee-hive, when any part is injured, thousands of bees will rush out to attack and drive the enemy to repair and restore the natural state of the hive, so when the body receives any injury, or when any germ enters the system and attacks the cells, the other cells rush forward with tremendous force, and fight against the enemy, and if they succeed in driving that enemy away or in killing that germ, the health, or the normal condition of the body is restored. But if they fail, the result will be pain, ache, or disease. Each cell possesses that life-force or power, by which it preserves itself, and heals the wound. Ordinarily, we say that the healing power is generated by the drugs and the medicines which are given by the physicians. But do they impart the healing power to us? Take a concrete example. When a bone is broken, what does the medical surgeon do? He simply sets it in its proper place, and with the help of the bandage, keeps it in the same position for a few days. The mending and repairing are done by nature. But what do we mean by nature? Nature is nothing else but the life-force, or the vital energy which dwells in the organs and the cells. No other force of nature than the life-force can accomplish this task. It is the healing power of nature which manifests itself in the human body, in the same manner as in all animals and vegetables. When the bark of a tree is scratched or torn, the same life-force of the tree heals it and makes it perfect. The healthy condition of the body is the result of the normal activities of the vital energy or the life-force. We all know that if the life-force or the vital actions are perfect, a man can easily recover from any injury or disease, however malignant it may be. But when the vital force is wasted, the nervous system is run down, the recovery becomes much more difficult; and recuperation is impossible, when the life-force is impaired or extremely weakened or compelled to work continuously under adverse conditions.

No disease will ever arise if free scope is given to the vital energy or the life-force to act under proper conditions. On the other hand, limit its scope and provide adverse conditions, the life-force will naturally take vigorous measures to overcome

or to remove the obstacles. The results of this effort will appear in the form of aches and pains and eventually failing to resist and to recover the normal activities, and then the organism will die under heavy pressure, producing the symptoms of the incurable disease.

Thus we can understand that nature has supplied us with a certain amount of healing power. This power dwells in every form of living substance. But its quantity varies in different individuals, as some have a tremendous power of healing, and others have little. A healthy child possesses an abundance of life-force. If a bone is broken or any organ is injured, it will be cured in a shorter time than in a grown up person whose life-force is wasted by dissipation.

In science of Yoga, this healing power of nature is called the *prana*. It is a Sanskrit term, meaning the life-force, or the vital energy. Sometimes it is translated as the 'breath of life'. That breath of life, which is described in the *Genesis*¹: 'And the Lord God had formed a man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life', and again in the *Book of Job*: 'The Spirit of God hath made me and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life²', does not mean merely the atmospheric air which enters into the nostrils, but it means the life-force, or the *prana*. It does not signify that a specific quantity of air was bottled up in the human system by God at the time of our birth which must be exhausted before death comes, but it means the power of the *prana* which is the source of life, the cause of the respiratory process and the producer of vital actions.

According to the science of breath, each living soul possesses the power of the *prana* by which are caused the activities of the motor and sensory nerves. The nerve-currents which travel through these nerves, are produced by vibration of the *prana*. The nerve-centres in the spine are the storehouses of this life-force, where it is generated and kept. In case of emergency, this life-force goes through different parts of the body, and distributes the healing powers. The more we can store up this power of the *prana*, the stronger we shall be physically and mentally. He who possesses a sufficient quantity of this breath

¹ *The Genesis*, Ch. II, V. 7

² Cf. Chapter XXXIII, V. 4

of life or *prana*, has perfect health and enormous vitality and strength which he can impart to others, if he wishes to do so.

This is the secret of the magnetic healing. The loss of the *prana* or the nerve-force is the cause of the nervous prostration and of all other diseases. He who has gained mastery over this breath of life, can consciously direct the healing power of the *prana* to the diseased part, generate new vibrations in the cells of those parts. By the higher breathing exercises and by destroying the cause of the disease, he can easily gain perfect health and strength. He can bring health and strength constantly to every part of his body. By polarizing the activities of the cells, he will remove the obstacles that prevent the normal vibration of the vital current of those cells. The cells are moving in certain directions, but he can make them all obey his will-power, and then he can do anything with them, and cure all diseases. But an ordinary person who has no control over the breath of life, cannot do it. A true Yogi claims that he can gain mastery over this breath of life and can cure all diseases. Of course, such diseases have not produced decomposition or disorganization. But all other diseases in the preliminary stages can be cured by these higher breathing exercises. The breathing exercises will bring the actual control over this nerve-force, and they will help us to draw the *prana* from the atmospheric air and also from food and water, because this life-force is all-pervading.

The manifestation of this force is only to be found through the nerve-centres and the nerves. Therefore, if we know the secret of drawing the life-force or the *prana* into our system from the the atmosphere since the quantity of air which passes through our lungs, possesses the *prana*, and if we can extract it and store it in the nerve-centres, then we can use it at any time when it is needed. Nature possesses it, but no individual can give it, unless that individual possesses a superabundance of the *prana*. Therefore, when we go to a healer, he may give it, and we may feel better for the time being, but as soon as it is used up, we shall be obliged to return to him once again. The true Yogi, however, says that if you know the method by which you can manufacture that life-force in yourself, then, there will be no need of your going to others and borrowing it from them.

The Christian Scientists, the Faith Healers, and the Mental

Healers can cure diseases without using drugs, but if they knew the secret of manufacturing the life-force or the *prana* through breathing exercises, as taught by the Yogis of India, they would surely gain more marvellous results. Having learnt the secret of manufacturing the power or life-force, a Yogi says that one can easily become master of one's body and mind. A Yogi can cure diseases by the power of touch, or by the power of command, simply by saying: 'Be thou cured, be thou healed'. Such instances of instantaneous cure can be found in all countries. Jesus the Christ was one who possessed the power of command. Lord Buddha and Sri Ramakrishna also had this power.

The power which is developed through the breathing exercises, will produce the wonderful results in a very short time. Those who know the secret of manufacturing and storing away the *prana*, possess perfect health. But this cannot be achieved in a day, or in a month. It will require some time to gain that mastery over the breath of life. It will also require an absolute self-control. One should live a pure and chaste life, and should learn the secret of transmuting the nervous energy and sex energy into the will-power by practising the higher breathing exercise of a Yogi.

In order to cure diseases, we must wield a tremendous will-power. There are Yogis who can cure diseases by simply willing, and their will never fails. That will-power can be strengthened and increased by the breathing exercises. This development of the life-power is one of the ideals of a Yogi, or a student of the science of breath. The first effect of the successful breathing exercises is the control of the nerves, or what we call freedom from nervousness and also from all diseases which proceed from the nervous disorder. The physical strength will be almost unlimited, and the person will be so strong and hardy that he will not be easily affected by the sudden changes of weather, nor by hunger or thirst. A small quantity of food or drink will be enough to produce the great results. Any one who practises the breathing exercises faithfully, will gain the highly beneficial results both in the body and the mind. He will remove all impurities from his system and overcome all the abnormal and diseased conditions. He will no longer be subject to rheumatism, stiffness of joints or muscles, paralysis and other ills, for the higher vibrations of the *prana* will destroy

their causes. Every individual, whether young or old, man or woman, is bound to get some result if the exercises be properly practised for six months. He is furthermore sure to cure the mental disease or a restless state of mind. He will be master of his senses and also of his passions and animal desires. He will conquer anger, hatred, anxiety, jealousy, worry, by raising the vibration of the *prana* on the higher plane of the psychic activity.

This *prana* or vital force produces the will-power. The will-power is the highest manifestation of the power, and the spiritual power will also come to him who has gained the absolute mastery over himself. Thus, gradually conquering hunger and thirst and gaining mastery over his body, mind, and senses, he will live in the world like a true Yogi. Then he will know what this breath of life is and how wonderful is the healing power of the *prana*

CHAPTER III

THE MAGNETIC HEALING

The healing power of the *prana* is manifested by those who are known in America and Europe as the magnetic healers. They may not know that the so-called personal magnetism is nothing but the expression of the same life-force which is called *prana* by the Yogis of India. From the very ancient times the Hindu Yogis have cured the most malignant and incurable diseases by exercising this natural healing power upon the patients, either by blowing their breath through the mouth upon the diseased part, or by laying their hands upon it or by simply touching it with their fingers. A similar method was adopted by Jesus the Christ when he touched the eyes of two blind men and healed them. It is said in the *St Matthew*: "Then touched he their eyes, saying, according to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened."¹ Further it is mentioned: "So Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes; and immediately their eyes received sight."²

There have been innumerable cases of similar cures, performed by the Yogis, from ancient times down to the present day among the people of India. Whenever the physicians give up any case as hopeless and incurable, and if the patient has the good fortune to find such a Yogi healer, he is sure to receive a miraculous demonstration of the healing power of the *prana* or of the magnetic healing. There are, of course, healers of all kinds in India who go about from place to place, healing the sick and curing various sorts of ailments and organic diseases. Some of these Yogi healers would blow their breath or *prana* in a glass of water, or upon a flower, or upon a pinch of the dust of the ground, and through this medium they would transmit their healing power to the patient. For instance, if water charged with the *prana* might be taken internally or applied externally or sprinkled upon the wound, it would produce miraculous effects.

¹ Cf. *St. Matthew*, Ch IX, 29-30

² *Ibid.*, Ch. XX, 34.

There are other magnetic healers in India who use the method of making, passes over the person, suffering from various diseases, and thus transmitting the magnetic currents of the *prana*, charged with its curative powers. They know how to control these currents and direct them wherever they desire. The ordinary methods of the magnetic healing are: the rubbing of the hand upon the body; the striking of the body with fingers; the kneading of the flesh and muscles of the patient, and the so-called *massage* and *osteopathic* treatments. These have been adopted by the Yogis, the magnetic healers of ancient and modern India.

Most people in Christendom believe that the healing power is a special gift, bestowed by God upon the disciples and followers of Christ, but science of Yoga teaches that it is the gift of the life-force (*prana*) to all the individuals. In some persons, it is more abundant than in others. But the Yogis understand the hidden law of healing and, therefore, they can heal the sick and cure all diseases in the same way, as Jesus did thousands of years ago. It is such a common thing in India that people would walk hundreds of miles to pay a visit to a Yogi and to have their diseases cured. Therefore, whenever a Yogi becomes famous as a healer, hundreds of patients would flock around him day and night to receive his blessing.

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna possessed the wonderful healing powers, but he seldom exercised them. Once I witnessed his marvellous power of instantaneous healing, which he demonstrated upon his beloved disciple Narendra (Vivekananda). One morning Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna came with his disciples to Ram Babu's house. The gathering was very large and the great Master took his seat and glanced around and enquired, "Where is Narendra?" Ram Babu said that Narendra had severe congestion in his brain and was lying in bed in a dark room with ice water on his head and could not bear the light. The great Master wanted to see Narendra and asked some of his disciples to bring him there. Thereupon I along with his other disciples went to Narendra's home which was in the neighbourhood. We went to the dark room, and saw him lying on a bed with a wet towel on his head, and he was suffering terribly. He had tried everything without any relief. We gave him the Master's message. He said that he was sorry

that it was impossible for him to go out in the light, and, furthermore, he was too sick to be in a crowd. We all urged him again and again, and persuaded him to come with his head and eyes covered with a wet cloth, and led him by his arms along the way. He said that pain in his head was so severe that it was as if some one was pushing his skull with a crowbar from within. Sri Ramakrishna was delighted to see Narendra, who bowed at his holy feet and received his blessings. The great Master touched Narendra's head and said: "My boy, what is the matter with your head?" Instantly Narendra was healed, and everyone was struck with wonder at this marvellous cure of such a serious illness. Narendra sat there in the midst of that large gathering, and sang ecstatic songs with the accompaniment of musical instruments, hearing which the great Master remained in deep *samadhi* (Godconsciousness). For four hours he sang steadily without feeling any ill effect from this tremendous exertion.

I also remember another instance when one day Latu Maharaj (Swami Adbhutananda), a lady disciple of Sri Ramakrishna (Golap Ma) and I, on a boat with Sri Ramakrishna, were returning from Calcutta to Dakshineswar. It was half past two, nearly afternoon. We all felt very hungry and the Master too was hungry. In order to purchase something to eat, we cast the anchor of the boat at the Barahanagar ghat. There was only a one-anna coin with that lady disciple (Golap Ma). I took that coin and set out. After a while I came back to the Master with a small quantity of sweets. The Master took that quantity from me, and fully ate it up. Then, he drank some water from the Ganges with his folded hands. We did not get a grain even to eat, and so we began to look at one another. But just immediately after, we felt no more hungry, and our stomachs were really filled up.¹

¹ We mention here another authentic record from *Ramakrishna-Lilaprasanga* by Swami Saradananda, another Apostle of Sri Ramakrishna. 'One day Sri Ramakrishna took Narendra Nath (Swami Vivekananda) to a private place in the Panchavati, where he underwent severe austerity for years and attained to the realization of Truth. The Master told his great disciple: "Look here, my disciple, by the grace of the Divine Mother I have acquired the miraculous powers (*ashta-siddhi*). But, as I am totally forgetful even of the very garment on my own body, how can I make use of them? So, I am thinking of giving them away to you with the permission of the Mother, because, the Mother informed me long ago that you were destined to serve Her in many works in future. If those powers

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, however, healed the sick souls, took their sins away, and lifted them up into the realm of God-consciousness, by a single touch or glance, and thus struck the sword of wisdom at the root of all evil, and made them whole.

are infused in you, then, you can use them to serve various purposes. What is your opinion about it?"

Since his first visit to the Master, Narendra Nath had the opportunity to witness his many supernatural powers. So, he had no ground of disbelieving them. After much consideration he asked the Master whether those supernatural powers would help him to realize God. The Master replied: "Although these miraculous powers will not prove helpful, yet, when you, after seeing God, will be engaged in doing His works, these powers will help you very much". On hearing this Narendra Nath told the Master: "No, Sir, I do not want them. Let me first realize God, then I shall consider whether they should be accepted or not. If I get possession of these powers before my spiritual perfection, if I forget God using these powers recklessly out of selfish motive, then, I shall be overtaken by ruin".

"Sri Ramakrishna was glad beyond measure to see the total aversion of his worthy disciple to these miraculous powers and blest him.—P.

CHAPTER IV

I

SCIENCE OF MENTAL HEALING

Most intimate is the relation between the mind and the body. Whoever possesses a clear idea of this relation, can solve the mystery of earthly existence and explain the power of mind over body. From ancient times various thinkers and teachers have given different theories as to the origin of life and mind, and those theories have been the foundation of different systems of philosophy, religion, and also of various cults, known under different names. But there are others again who hold the materialistic theory of life and mind. The theory of the spontaneous manifestation of life and mind of the modern biologists does not explain the real origin of life and mind, but simply shuts off all investigations of earnest seekers after truth in the vast field of mental and psychical realm which is at present unknown to us.

The materialistic thinkers who regard mind as a function of the brain, are satisfied with the belief that all mental powers are but the results of the organic activities of the nervous system and the brain. The medical practitioners who still believe in the materialistic theory of life and mind, regard the human body as a machine and as a chemical vat. All the activities and organic functions are the results of material forces and chemical actions of matter which are governed by mechanical laws; and when there is any abnormal condition or disease, they maintain that it can be remedied by chemical and mechanical means. Consequently, they resort to the drug cure, which is based upon chemistry and its implications.

These practitioners have banished the mind entirely from the medical field, as either a cause or a factor in the healing process, and have kept it as an effect of the organic functions, especially of the brain. As the liver would secrete bile, so the brain secretes ideas and thoughts; and, if the brain is diseased or disordered, the mind is affected. The mind as an entity is

not considered as a reality. Consequently, they seek salvation in drugs, which are material particles and which must be put together in order to produce a chemical effect. They regard medicine as the panacea for all diseases, which, in their opinion, are nothing but the derangements of the normal chemical processes. They do not accept the theory of the mind or the soul as an entity. They say that consciousness is the result of the activity of the brain-cells, and explain it in this way, that as a piece of metal in a furnace produces heat, first red, then white glow, so the nerve-cells when heated, produce a glow which is our consciousness.¹ Therefore they say that all the causes of disease are physical and that the remedy must be found in the domain of physical matter. They deny the existence of the vital force as distinct from the other forces of nature as well as the power of suggestion.

But the advanced thinkers of this age have witnessed the wonderful cures of diseases, performed by the mental healers and the spiritual healers who go about under different names and who do not use drugs. They are forced to admit that the mind has a tremendous power over the nerves, tissues, cells, and organs of the whole physical body. There are some scientists, physiologists, and medical practitioners like Dr. Maudsley, Dr. Foster, Dr. Hammond,² Prof. Angelo Mosso, and others, who have investigated the relation between the mind and the body, and who have come to the conclusion that it is a fact that mental conditions affect our physical and organic functions. They maintain that the mind has the power over the body and that it is not entirely the result of the activity of the brain. The brain is the seat of this something which we call mind or soul or conscious entity.

Moreover, it has been shown again and again by experiments upon the lower animals that when the cerebral hemispheres were taken out, very little change in their general behaviour was produced. Again, the post-mortem cases, recorded by Dr. Thompson in his work, entitled *Brain and Personality*, show that persons who had lost one-half of the brain by accident or disease performed all the mental functions

¹ Cf. Swami Abhedananda: *Life Beyond Death*, and *True Psychology*.

² Dr. Hammond, the great surgeon and the author of the work entitled, *The Brain not the Sole Organ of the Mind*.

with the other half, without exhibiting any lack of mental powers and talents. Many other scientific proofs can be given in support of the argument that mind is not the same as the brain or any of its functions. But their relation is so intimate that a few people can separate the mind or consciousness from the brain or physical body.

Every mental function produces the corresponding physical changes in the system. We may say that there is 'no psychosis without neurosis', or, in other words, 'no mental change without a peculiar nervous state corresponding to it'. In the same manner, it can be shown that the mind or thought has the power of producing various abnormal conditions. For instance, anger and fear would affect the digestion and the muscular actions of the heart. The worry breaks down the nerves. Nervous prostration is caused by mental worry and disappointment. Grief has a tremendous power over the physical organic functions. It destroys appetite. Darwin says of the protracted grief: "The circulation becomes languid, the face pale, the muscles flaccid, the eye-lids droop, the head hangs on the contracted chest; the lips, cheeks, and lower jaw, all sink downward by their own weight".

Again, the power of the mental suggestion produces wonderful effects upon the physical body.³ Fifty years ago, few people were acquainted with the power of the mind, but lately it has taken a great hold upon the minds of different practitioners. They consider that mental suggestion will create wonderful cures of all kinds of diseases. Some time ago, when I was in London, I saw a case of a girl who had a peculiar kind of disease which disabled her from keeping any food in her stomach. Whatever she ate, she would throw out, and she was emaciated and very sick, as she had no nourishment for a long time. Different physicians treated her with their various

³ Henry Wood also informs us 'Suggestion of some kind is the great mental motor. It may enter the human mind either in thought-waves projected by another mind, or through the avenue of an outer sense. Hypnotic suggestion stirs the mind on the sensuous plane by the dominant imposition of the force of another personality. Ideal suggestion is the photographing of pure and perfect ideals directly upon the mind through the medium of the sense of sight. It is voluntary and free from any admixture of personality or imperfection. By the cultivated vigour of thought-concentration it develops wonderful power and utility'.—Cf. *Ideal Suggestion through Mental Photography*, p. 7

methods, but failed to cure her. At last she was sent to a healer, who used mental suggestions to heal diseases. This mental healer made her gaze at the tip of his finger, which he held up for a few seconds, and put her in hypnotic sleep. Then he gave her the suggestion that she should eat the food, which was placed before her. In her hypnotic sleep, the girl ate some biscuits and drank a glass of milk. After a few minutes, she was awakened. In the meantime, the table was cleared off, and when she awoke, she did not throw it out. This treatment was repeated day after day until she was completely cured. This illustrates how the power of suggestion of another mind works upon the subconscious mind of the patient and produces marvellous result.

Such cases have proved the truth of the power of suggestion which acts miraculously upon the non-volitional subconscious mind. This subconscious mind lies close to the border of the material plane. It has no volition of its own, and the cures by suggestion are like the effects of the reflexes. The subconscious mind possesses unlimited powers and possibilities. It permeates the cells and the tissues of the organs of the physical body, and gives them life and vitality, and manipulates them according to its own caprice. Thus the scientific experiments have been made to show that the power of the mind creates wonders and miraculous cures in a great many cases.

The power of suggestion, again, is so tremendous that as it can cure diseases, so it can produce diseases. An experiment was made upon a healthy young man who was going to his office in the morning. Six of his friends put their heads together to give a suggestion to his mind, without letting him know that they were doing it. As he started out from his home, one of his friends, who was standing at the street corner, looked at him and said. "How do you do? You look very sick; what is the matter with you? How strange you look today! Are you sick?" The young man replied: "No, I am very well; I have no trouble with me. I am all right". He went a short distance and met another friend who said: "Good morning. Why, you look very sick? What is the matter with you? You are awfully sick". He said: "No, I am all right. What makes you say so?" "Well, I see you are changed. You are entirely

different. You never looked like this before". The young man said: "No, you are all wrong. I am all right. I have good health and good appetite. I ate a good breakfast and am going to my office". A little further he found another friend, who said: "How do you do? You look very sick. Thus, six friends held him up at different stations on his way to the office, and they all said the same thing. Then, it got in his nerves. The young man went to his office and said to himself: "I do not feel very well now. What is the matter with me? All my friends say that I am sick. I must be sick". After a few hours he began to feel the effect and was convinced that he was sick with high fever. He stayed in bed and called in a doctor. The doctor came, but the man suffered for a time from the effect of these suggestions. Next day it was explained to him that it was all a joke, but the joke worked so seriously that he felt disgusted with his friends who played such a trick upon him. However, this shows that the power of suggestion can produce diseases in the physical body. It can raise the temperature, change the circulation, increase the heart beat and the pulse, and create other abnormal conditions.

Another experiment was made in England some time ago upon a man, condemned to death. This man was placed on a table. His eyes were blindfolded and his limbs were strapped on the table so that he could not move. He was then told that every drop of his blood would be drained out of his system in a short time. An insignificant puncture was made on the skin of his neck with a needle, and a siphon was arranged near his head in such a manner that it allowed a stream of warm water to flow over his neck and fall with a little dripping sound into a basin on the floor. After six minutes that man died, believing that nearly seven or eight quarts of blood were drained out of his body.

Let me mention another very remarkable instance of the power of the mental suggestion. Doctor Wiggs of Leyman in Europe gave a suggestion to a young girl, after she was put into hypnotic sleep, that every Friday she would develop a red cross on her chest for three months. The subject did not know anything about this suggestion, but next Friday, true to the doctor's suggestion, she developed a red cross on her chest. It was like a blood-blister in the form of a cross, and every Friday

it appeared for three months. Now, think of the power of suggestion over the healthy cells and tissues of another's body. That suggestion worked like a miracle upon the organic functions, the blood circulation, and the cellular activities of the nerves and nerve-centres of the whole system of the patient.

Similar results can be produced by the auto-suggestion, or concentration. By the power of strong concentration, the Catholic saints, St. Francis of Assisi and others produced the stigma in their hands and feet. Think of the power of the mind over the body. All such facts prove that mind is the principal factor in our physical existence, and that the body follows the suggestions, ideas, thoughts, emotions, and feelings of the mind. The mind is the creative power within us, and that mind is neglected by those medical men who consider that this physical body is nothing but a machine and that the mind is but the effect of the organic functions of the brain and the nerve-centres.

The mental healers, however, are now demonstrating every day that the latent power of the mind can produce a great many diseases in the system and can also cure many of them. Today the closer study of the mental powers in a man has revealed the truth that the greatest curative principle dwells in the individual, and it can be directed by the will. We do not have to get it from outside. It is already in us.

Before I came to the West, for twelve years I, myself, demonstrated the power of the mind over the body. During this period, as a Sannyasin monk I travelled from place to place all over India, living on one scanty meal of a few pieces of unleavened bread in hours and walking twenty-five or thirty miles a day and sleeping anywhere under the tree along the roadside in rain or sunshine. Once I walked barefoot on the glacier ice above sixteen thousand feet in the Himalaya mountains without feeling ill effects of the frost at any time. I warded off mountain sickness by the power of the mind. I stayed at the source of the Ganges for three months at the height of fourteen thousand feet, and used to plunge every morning in the river, where blocks of ice were floating all around, and yet, I never caught cold or suffered from any sickness during this long period of severe hardship and privation.

Once to test the power of mind over the body, I prayed for sickness, and my prayer was fulfilled abundantly within three days. I had high fever, bronchitis, and dysentery, and was laid up for six months. All these personal experiences have convinced me of the truth of Vedanta that mind is the creator of the world, and the mind is the real man; whatever a man does, is done by the mind; the body cannot do anything.⁴

Again, in studying the different steps of the evolutionary process of the animal forms, from the lower to the higher stages, we find that the mind antedates the organs. The organic changes take place according to the desires of the mind. The desire to see has produced the organs of sight, and the desire to eat has produced teeth, alimentary canal, and digestive organs. The desire to hold has produced hands, and the desire to walk has made the muscles of the legs. If we do not use these organs for some time, we shall forget how to use them. We shall have to learn all these like a child. If you watch a child when it begins to walk, you will see how it exerts its will-power to control the muscles which would not at first obey the command of its mind. But by repeated efforts, it succeeds in training them in the end.

When I was living in our Barahnagar monastery near Calcutta, India, on account of a serious operation on my foot, I could not stand on my legs and was obliged to lie on my back for six months. During this period I forgot how to walk, and when I tried, I could not. I had to walk just like a child, putting my whole weight upon the shoulders of my friend,⁵ and taking one step after another. It took some time before I could walk properly.

⁴ In the *Yogavasishtha* we find, it is mentioned;

(a) '*Manomatramato visvam yadyajjatam tadeva hi.*'
III 66 11.

(b) '*Samastam kalpanamatramidam visvam nastyeva mananadrite*
Manomanananirmanamatrametajagatrayam
Manovijrimbhanadidam samsara iti sammatam.'—
III 44 20-21, 110 48.

In the *Vivekachudamani* also we find,

'*Bhoktyadi visvam mana eva sarvam.*
Ato manahkalpita eva pumsah samsara na vastu-
to'sti.'—Sl. 170-171.

Cf also the *Madhyamika-Karika* by Nagarjuna and
Mandukya-Karika by Gaudapada.

⁵ Swami Saradananda

This shows that our mind is the primary factor and also the primary director to guide all the muscles which are like servants. The cells of the muscles have memory and are governed by the mind. If the muscles did not possess memory, we could not raise our hands twice in the same way, without making conscious efforts, as we did in the beginning. Dr. Maudsley says. "The acquired functions of the spinal cord and of the sensory ganglia obviously imply the existence of memory, which is indispensable to their formation and exercise". He further says: "A ganglionic centre, whether of mind, sensation, or movement, which was without memory, would be an idiotic centre incapable of being taught its functions."

The memory and the mind are manifested in our organs, tissues, and nerve-centres in the whole system. Therefore it is the mind that spreads out from the conscious plane down to the subconscious plane, and controls the whole organism. If the mind has created all these organs, it will be easy to understand that abnormal conditions of the body are but the objectified mental conditions, and, therefore, if the mental conditions are changed and brought into their normal state, the physical effects (which are known as diseases) will necessarily be changed. This is the whole rationale of the mental healing.

The mental healing includes the healing by the power of suggestion as well as the healing by changing the thought-current of the individual. Of course, if there be a habitual thought of any particular kind, it will produce a chronic disease. The habitual lust is a disease, the anger is a disease; the hatred is a disease; the jealousy is a disease; the worry is a disease; and the grief and the morbid states like melancholia and extreme passion are also destructive forces which will create havoc in the system. Anger would produce the bile, and if the bile is secreted abundantly, where would it go? It would go into the blood, and the whole system would be poisoned.

An experiment was made upon a cat. The cat was petted, made very happy, and was given food. An X-ray photograph of her stomach showed that while she was purring, her digestion was going on nicely and normally. But afterwards, she was made angry, and the X-ray photograph showed that as

soon as she was angry, her digestion stopped, and the liver began to secrete more bile. Consequently, her whole system was disturbed. It is a well-known scientific fact that the mother who nurses her babe in anger or under extreme passion, generates poison in her system and feeds her babe with poison. Naturally the babe would be sick. If the mother eats indigestible food, the baby will have colic. If, on the other hand, the mother's mind is happy, peaceful, and contented, the little one will be strong and free from all sickness.

These facts were known among the Hindu teachers centuries before Jesus was born. It was not Jesus who first brought out the healing practices, but history tells us that Appolonius of Tyna, who was a contemporary of Jesus, healed the sick and raised the dead. He went to India to learn the secret truths concerning life and death. The ancient Greek physician, Æsculapius was the greatest healer of the age and was proclaimed as the saviour of the mankind. He also raised the dead and his healing powers continued to manifest even after his death. Many of the healings ascribed to Jesus were perhaps done by Æsculapius or Appollonius. Even today you will find people who can perform wonderful cures amongst the Hindus, the Mohammedans, and the Buddhists. Nearly two centuries before Christ, the Buddhist monks practised various methods of mental healing and were known as Theraputta. In Pali *thera* means 'calm and peaceful', and *putta* means 'son'. Therefore, Theraputta originally meant 'son or disciple of Buddha', who practised mental healing. The English word 'therapeutic' can be traced back to its original Pali form, Theraputta. In the reign of the Buddhist Emperor Asoka (260 B C) the followers of Buddha went out as missionaries from Siberia to Ceylon, and from China to Egypt, to preach the Gospel of Buddha,⁶ to heal the sick, and to show the way to perfection.⁷

⁶ Sir E. A. Wallis Budge also admits "Buddhism was carried into Syria and Egypt by the envoys of Chandragupta and his grandson Asoka in the third century B C, and there is no doubt that it made its way into China before the Christian Era. Professor Rhys Davids says that it penetrated into China along the fixed route from India to that country, round the north-west corner of the Himalayas and across Eastern Turkestan. ** From this time Buddhism rapidly spread there. Monks from Central and North-Western India frequently travelled to China; and these Chinese themselves made many journeys to the older Buddhist countries to collect the sacred writings, which they diligently translated into Chinese. In the

Some of them came to Palestine, Syria, and Alexandria, taught the truth of mental and spiritual healing among the Essenes⁷ and established hospitals, not only for men, women, and children, but also for the lower animals.

The lower animals can be made to feel the power of thought. The horses, dogs, cats, and pet birds always respond to any suggestion given to them by their masters. A horse is sensitive to the feelings of his driver or rider. As with the animals, so with the vegetables. Even the plants are sensitive to the vibrations of the human beings, and can be influenced by the power of right thought. Some plants will die at the touch of persons who radiate destructive magnetic currents, while they will grow rapidly at the touch of others, whose vibrations are good and constructive. Some of them are sensitive to our mental suggestions. The *prana* vibrations or the vital currents that radiate from a person, would affect others favourably or unfavourably in the process of their growth and manifestation of the life-force. It is a fact. You may experiment upon your surroundings, and you will find that it is so. You may make a plant grow in one direction, produce blossoms upon one branch, or make it bear more fruit upon one bough than upon another by your powerful suggestions. The experiments have been made in this line, and they have been found very successful.

Therefore the mental healing is a natural power. This power can be consciously directed to the subconscious mind of the patient. I have already explained that subconscious mind possesses an unlimited power and possibility. Its field is larger than that of the conscious mind.⁸ Our conscious plane has a

fourth century Buddhism became the State religion"—Vide *Baralam and Yewasef*, pp. liii, lxxxiii.

Swami Abhedananda says in his *India and Her People* 'Asoka, who lived in 260 B.C., had his edicts inscribed on pillars of stone during his lifetime, and in one of those edicts we read that he sent Buddhist missionaries to different parts of the world, from Siberia to Ceylon, from China to Egypt, and that, for two centuries before the advent of Jesus, the Buddhist missionaries preached the sublime ethics of Buddha in Syria, Palestine, and Alexandria.'

⁷ The Swami has stated further in his *India and Her People*: 'These preachers (Buddhist) influenced the Jewish sect known as the Essenes; * * It can be shown that they (Essenes) belonged to the sect founded by the Buddhist monks from India, who lived in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt.' Cf. also Renan: *Life of Jesus*.

⁸ Cf. Swami Abhedananda: *True Psychology*

small area, in which we have the feelings of *I*, *me*, and *mine*. This conscious mind can control the healing power of the *prana*, and can produce marvellous results in mental healing. In mental healing, the healer first holds the normal attitude, or has a firm conviction that mind is the master of the body and also the controller of all organic functions,⁹ and then transmits it to the mind of the patient. The thought currents, rising from the mind of the healer, will influence the subconscious mind of the patient, stimulate it, and correct the effects of his abnormal mental conditions.

He, who can concentrate his mind and form a clear mental picture of the patient, as restored to perfect health, and transfer that picture to the patient's mind, is a successful mental healer. Of course, the patient's mind, during the treatment, must be quiet and in a receptive attitude, with faith in the power of the healer. The healer can mentally talk to the patient in case of absent treatment, and give suggestions of strength and perfect health, and send a strong current of thought of love through the patient's mind, driving out all negative thoughts of sickness, weakness, and ill health. The result will be a marvellous cure of malignant cases.

II

THE SPIRITUAL HEALING

There is another plane of consciousness in which the body idea vanishes and the true nature of our spirit (*Atman*) is revealed¹. It is called the state of superconsciousness (*samadhi*). It is the realm of the true Self, which is the perfect image of God. It is a state, where the individual soul (*jivatman*) comes in touch with the infinite mind or the infinite Spirit (*Paramatman*),

⁹ "Thought discipline and control is the key which unlocks spiritual storehouses of strength and attainment; and earnest desire and aspiration—which is 'prayer without ceasing'—is the motor which 'furnishes power and intensity' of healing power."—Cf. Henry Wood. *Ideal Suggestion through Mental Photography*, p. 70

¹ It is called the seventh plane of consciousness, according to psychic science. As regards the planes of consciousness, Henry Wood says: "The nature of man is complex. In the ascending evolutionary scale his physical organism stands upon the fifth great plane, having been preceded by the elementary, chemical, vegetable, and animal sub-divisions. He is now evolving a spiritual faculty, which is regarded as a sixth plane or state of

which is free from all disease, sorrow, suffering, and all imperfection. In that state, the power of the Spirit which is the source of our mind and mentality, is manifested. All the spiritual healing is produced by the individual self after entering into the state of superconsciousness and communing with the infinite source of life and power. Then the soul becomes free from the limitations of time and space, and transcends the realm of thought and other mental activities, and realizes its oneness with the supreme Spirit. The individual soul then becomes the channel through which the divine powers of the omnipotent Being begin to flow, and perform miraculous cures on the plane of consciousness. Our true Self is all-knowing and all-powerful. If we can once remove the obstacles and open the portal of the superconsciousness, and let the divine spirit manifest through our souls, then, we shall be true spiritual healers, not only of our own physical and mental troubles, but also of others.

The science of spiritual healing embraces various methods of healing adopted by different schools of healers. In the first place, it advocates the so-called natural methods of healing, such as regulating the diet (food and drink), physical exercises, and correct breathing. These are the most important things we should observe, for they will help us in adjusting the physical details of our earthly existence and in creating proper conditions, under which the power of the spirit can be manifested on the physical plane. But if we neglect them and exercise the power of the mind, we shall be taxing our mind unnecessarily and be using up the vital energy in trying to remove the ills, which have been caused by physical conditions, and which can be removed very easily. Now, for instance, it is possible that you can sit in the draught and do not

consciousness, and has within him the germ of a seventh, as a final supreme attainment. The sixth order or sense has also denominated the intuition; and the seventh, the divine or Christ-plane, where man meets God and becomes one with him.

"Some of the esoteric systems of the Orient find seven elements in Man, in the following ascending order. first, the physical organism; second, the vitality; third, the astral body; fourth, the animal soul; fifth, the intelligent or human soul; sixth, the spiritual soul; seventh, the divine soul, or Godconsciousness. Other systems count but five grades or planes in the human economy, making the distinctions a little broader than those just enumerated".—Cf. *Ideal Suggestion through Mental Photography*, p. 65.

get cold. Of course, you have to use a certain power to do that. The easiest way is to save that power and energy, by not sitting in the draught. Save that energy for something else. This is a rational method. It does not make one a fanatic, or a crank. Because mind can produce all these things. Why should we tempt the mind? Why should we tempt God? God has given us common sense, and it is the best sense. We must exercise this common sense under all conditions. Therefore, when the normal states of the physical and the vital actions of the individual are perfectly harmonious with the environments, the natural method of healing produces the best results. But these natural methods will not be sufficient to overcome the abnormal mental conditions, such as, anger, fear, hatred, jealousy, envy, malice, worry, lust, greed, and other passionate emotions, which affect our physical health and become causes of various diseases.

Here we should adopt any one of the various methods of mental healing, known under different names. They all exercise the power of suggestion, although many of them do not analyse the psychological processes of their mind, and some of them delude themselves by thinking that they can work miracles. Some mental healers adopt the negative method of denying the existence of matter, sickness, disease, and death, and of calling them errors or delusions of the mortal mind. This negative method will produce wonderful results. In case of sickness, deny it and call it unreal and a delusion (*maya*). Deny the real existence of the matter and also the real existence of the body. This method is based upon the pure non-dualistic theory of the Vedanta. It is also based on the idealistic theory of Bishop Berkeley and other idealistic philosophers who deny the existence of the matter and believe that all material objects are nothing but the ideas or thought-forms which exist in our minds. Therefore the matter has no separate existence from the mind.² Through this negative method of denial of matter and disease, many cases have been cured.

The secret of this method lies not in negative assertions like: 'I am not sick', but in cultivating the opposite thought, that disease is the effect of a wrong thought, that it is a delusion

² The Buddhist theory of *viññānavāda* also maintains this view.

(*maya*), and that it has no real existence. This wrong thought should be substituted with the right thought of the true Self (*Atman*), which is never sick; for Vedanta teaches: "This thy Self (*Atman*) is free from hunger, thirst, sorrow, delusion, old age, and death."³ The man who knows, "I am He" (*Atman*), what could he wish and for what desire would he take the ill of the body upon himself?⁴

There are other healers who follow the positive method affirming 'wholeness' and emphasize such statements as, 'I am whole,' 'I am well,' 'I am perfect,' 'I am healthy'. They take the standpoint of the perfect Spirit which is realized in the superconscious state and try to manifest its qualities by affirmative suggestions. By this method the belief and thought currents of the patient's mind can be changed from sickness into a healthy state. Vedanta teaches: 'The Self (*Atman*) is all-pervading, effulgent, incorporeal scatheless, untouched by brain or nerves, pure, unaffected by evil, the Knower, omnipresent and self-existent'.⁵ 'When a man realizes this Self (*Atman*) as God and as the Lord of all that is and will be, then he doubts no more'⁶ 'Then there is no longer illness, old age or death for him, who has obtained a body produced by the fire of the Yoga (union with God)'.⁷ Thus, this positive method of affirmation will produce wonderful cures. As the negative method starts from one extreme, so the positive method starts from another extreme, but they both meet in the end at the same standpoint and produce similar results.

There are others who advocate the metaphysical method of affirmation of 'wholeness' and denial of evil. They partly deny and partly affirm; deny sickness, and affirm at the same time: 'I am not sick, I am well'. They assert: 'I am the whole,

³ 'Ta Atma sarvanrarah Katamo Yajnavalkyasya sarvantaro yo'-shanyapi-pase shokam moham jadam mrityumotyeli Etam vai tamatmanam viditva *' Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, III. 5. 1.

⁴ 'Atmanam chedvjanitayadayamasmiti purushah. Kimucchan kasya kamaya shariramanusamjvaret'—Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV 4. 12

⁵ 'Sa paryagachchukramakaya-mavrana-masnavram shuddhamapa-pavidham Kavmanishi paribhuh svayambhuryathatathatyato'rthan vyadadhachchashvatibhyah samabhyah'—Isha Upanishad, 8.

⁶ 'Yadaitamanupashyatyatmanam devamanjasa.

⁷ Ishanam bhuta-bhavyasya na tato vijugupsate'—Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV. 4. 15.

⁸ 'Prithvyaptejo'nalakhe samutthite panchatmake yogagune pravritte; Na tasya rogo na jara na mrityuh praptasya yogagnimayam sharvam.'—Shvetashvatara Upanishad, II. 12

and there is no such thing as sickness or death'. Here the healer makes one statement, which is true from the standpoint of the Spirit which is never sick, while the sufferer is just as true (as far as his feeling is concerned) when he says: 'I am sick, or I have pain', from the standpoint of his body and mind. He states the truth that his feeling of pain is merely a mental state of which he is conscious. This statement may be the result of a wrong thought or delusion, but still he feels it for the time being. In order to deny this apparent truth of his feeling of sickness, he will have to assert that quality or state of the Spirit, which is permanent and unchangeable. Through suggestion, in the form of constant affirmation of 'wholeness', the patient's mind will be lifted above all erroneous feelings and convictions; and perfect health which is the normal expression of the Spirit, will be manifested on the plane of sense-consciousness.

Each of these classes of healers, however, demands absolute faith on the part of the patient. If the patient has absolute faith, it does not matter whether the healer adopts the negative or the positive or the metaphysical method; because absolute and dogmatic faith bring the receptive attitude of the mind, and helps the patient to focus this whole mental power on one ideal, and the result is the most marvellous cure of a very serious disorder. If the patient can once gain faith in the power of the Spirit and can doggedly assert that the symptoms of his troubles are nothing but the unreal thought-forms, caused by erroneous thinking and indiscrimination (*avidya* and *aviveka*), then the patient is sure to get immediate relief and instantaneous healing. Jesus said: 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believe'.⁸ 'Thy faith hath made thee whole'.⁹ 'Believe only and she shall be made whole'.¹⁰ The faith healers use the power of absolute and dogmatic faith directly, while the mental healers, the divine healers, and the metaphysical healers use this power of faith indirectly through the medium of affirmation and denials.

It should be remembered that the method of spiritual healing is distinct from any of these methods. It does not

⁸ Cf. Mark, IX, 28

⁹ Cf. Luke, VIII, 48

¹⁰ Cf. Luke, VIII, 50.

depend upon denials or affirmations. It is a direct method of drawing from the infinite Spirit the healing power of the *prana* and bringing it down to the conscious plane and directing it to the subconscious.¹¹ This can be done consciously. It is a method of direct manipulation of the subconscious stratum of our being by the illumined consciousness of our true Self or Spirit (*Atman*). We do not have to deny sickness or affirm wholeness or exercise faith, but we have to rise into the super-conscious state and fill our whole subconscious being with the higher vibrations of the *prana*, or the life-force which emanate from the infinite stock of the Spirit or *Atman*. Then focus those vibrations to the centre of disorder in the physical body, and charge the cells and the tissues of the organs with the healing power of the *prana*. Thus, strengthened by the illumined consciousness of the Spirit and charged by the normal vibrations of the *prana* the cells and the tissues will throw off the impurities, kill the germs, the microbes, and the bacteria, and completely recover from their abnormal vibrations. The result will be a marvellous cure.

In the first place, you will have to understand what the absolute Truth is, and whether you are the Spirit or the body, and then change your conviction. Remember that you are the maker of the blood, that you are the master of the body and that you are manufacturing all the time consciously or unconsciously the nervous matter and the physical strength. And if you cannot do this, who else will do it for you? If I am the maker of the body and the maker of the blood, and if I cannot do it myself, who else can help me? There runs a proverb: 'Heaven helps those who help themselves'. We have to remember that we are endowed with that healing power already, and we should exercise it; and at the same time, we should have the understanding. We should correct our errors and understand the absolute Truth.

¹¹ Henry Wood shows the difference between the spiritual healing and the mental healing by stating: 'Spiritual healing is beyond ordinary intellectual apprehension. Transcending as it does the plane of the reasoning faculty, it cannot be proved by argumentative logic. It concerns the inner ego, and can only be comprehended by the deeper vision of the intuitional and spiritual nature.'

'On the contrary', he says, 'mental healing is entirely based upon law, which, though belonging to the higher domain, is orderly and exact. It enjoins human compliance with *existing* law, already perfect and incapable of improvement.'—Cf. *Ideal Suggestion through Mental Photography*, p. 20.

I will give you an illustration of the healing made by the spiritual method, without affirming or denying. A few years ago, when I was living at the Vedanta Ashrama at West Cornwall, Connecticut, I met with an accident. My right leg got twisted, and the fibula was fractured. I could not walk, and the pain was acute. With great difficulty, I came home from the orchard where I had this accident, and told everybody that my leg was broken. The Vedanta Ashrama was situated in the heart of the Berkshire mountains, far away from civilization. There was neither a doctor nor a hospital in the neighbourhood, and, consequently, there was no way of getting any help. I bathed my leg with hot water. All friends there thought that it was a bad sprain and advised me to rub horse liniment and not to stay in bed, but, to get over it by the power of mind. I replied: 'All right, I will try'. Then, with a piece of cloth I bandaged my leg, and used it just as if nothing had happened. I was walking without crutches with a little difficulty. It did not heal very well for sometime, and there was constant pain on the spot. People would not believe that I had this fracture. After a few days, I went to New York, and consulted with a noted surgeon who was a friend of mine. I was limping when I went to his chamber, and he asked me: 'What's the matter?' I said that I fell and sprained the muscles of my leg. He said: 'Let me see'. After examining, he told me that I had a fracture of the fibula, and that I must go to a hospital at once to have it set. I said that I would like to see the X-ray photograph of the fracture and convince myself as well as my friends. The doctor sent me to the best man in the city of New York, who took the X-ray photograph of the broken bone, and it showed a diagonal fracture of a bad type.¹² In the meantime, I was walking without crutches. Once, I remember, I was walking with a friend of mine, who was a fast walker and who could walk a mile in about ten minutes, and I was trying to keep pace with him with my broken leg. The doctor told me to put my leg out of commission to have it properly set. He also said that, if I did not give absolute rest to my leg, I would remain lame all my life. He wanted to send me to a hospital. But I refused to go, and returned to the Ashrama instead.

¹² The X-ray photograph is reproduced here

There I used my leg, as if nothing had happened. A callous was formed at first and the fractured bone healed itself in a short time.

Afterwards, I went down to Florida and lectured in different cities. Once I gave three lectures on one Sunday (in Atlanta, Georgia), and stood on my legs for six hours (two hours for each). A noted Christian Science healer told me that if I were a Christian Scientist, I would have been immortalized for this marvellous healing of a fractured bone.

This demonstration proved that in the spiritual healing, the negative method of denial and the positive method of affirmation are not absolutely necessary. One should go direct to the source of all healing power, and get from there abundance of life-force, and direct it consciously to the subconscious plane, and let the subconscious mind manifest it wherever it is needed, and produce a marvellous cure¹³. It will knit together broken bones and cure all ailments. A broken bone is seldom healed by the mental healers or the Christian Scientists. But it can be done by spiritual method of healing. Nothing is impossible for the omnipotent Spirit (*Atman*), which dwells within us.¹⁴

The science of the spiritual healing does not urge anyone to believe in anything except in the truth of one's own spiritual Self which is omnipotent. It does not make any difference whether one is a follower of Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, or of Mrs. Eddy. So long as each soul is a part of the infinite Spirit, it is potentially divine and all-powerful. You do not have to join any cult or accept anything, but remember that all books on healing and all modern healers and other teachers are telling you the same truth which has been taught for ages before the time of Jesus, especially among the Yogis of India. You will find this truth explained for the first time in the Vedas. The whole of the Atharva Veda deals with faith healing, and mental and spiritual healing.

¹³ 'It is provided that in the various departments of human consciousness, the ego must make constant progress in its residential preferences, from the lower towards the higher, otherwise, arrested development, in harmony, dis-ease, and finally inversion, take place.'—Cf. Henry Wood: *Ideal Suggestion through Mental Photography*, p. 67.

¹⁴ The Spirit or *Atman* really does not heal or cure anything. The Swami means to say that it is the will-power which, when illumined by the Divine radiance of the omnipotent Spirit, heals or cures diseases and ailments.

The spiritual healing depends entirely upon going into the superconscious state and drawing from the infinite Spirit all the powers that we need. If we can once learn how to send the vibrations of the healing power of the *prana* to the cells and the tissues of the body, we have learnt the secret of this science. The self-healing should be practised before one tries to heal others. In self-healing one should discriminate between the real and the unreal, between the eternal and non-eternal, between the spirit and the matter, between truth and error or the false concept of the appearance of truth. For instance, when a person is suffering from cold, he should ask these questions: Does the Spirit catch cold, or does the body or the matter catch cold? If the Spirit cannot catch cold, then who catches cold? It is a delusion of the indiscriminative mind. Therefore proper discrimination will remove that delusion instantly, just as the darkness of night is dispelled at the approach of the light of the sun. Right discrimination will correct all errors. Right discrimination will bring a conviction that as the Spirit is free from sickness, and as my true Self is the Spirit, so I can never be sick or ill. When this spiritual conviction takes root in consciousness of the patient, that very moment he becomes free from the wrong conviction of sickness, which was the cause of his trouble, and instantaneously he is healed.

Some people use the method called visualization, or, in other words, forming a mental image that the patient is strong and healthy. But mere visualization cannot do the healing. The correct understanding of the true or the perfect Spirit must be at the bottom of all methods of healing. A directly opposite thought is needed to rectify the erroneous concept. Of course, there are cases where the ignorant and the weak mind of the patient needs help from stronger and more discriminative minds.

According to the science of spiritual healing, all treatment of diseases is based upon these fundamental principles:

(1) That the Spirit (*Atman*) is the creator and the master of the body.

(2) That the individual spirit is as perfect and omnipotent as the universal Spirit (*Brahman*).

(3) That the life-force or the *prana* proceeds from the Spirit (*Atman*).

(4) That the cells and the tissues have life and mind in each and are governed by the subconscious mind of the individual.

(5) That the individual soul or the self-conscious thinker (*jivatman*) can draw abundance of healing power from the supreme Spirit, by entering into superconsciousness.

(6) That the Spirit can directly heal all disorders of the organs and nerves of the body, and *dis-ease* of the mind as well.

Through the illumined consciousness of the supreme Spirit, the individual soul rises above all errors and delusions, and de-hypnotizes itself from the obsession of fear, false conviction, and sickness, and other influences of ignorance and indiscrimi-nation. So long as we are identified with the gross physical body, we have the feeling of oneness with it and we possess the body-ideas. But this will appear as a delusion the moment we become conscious of our true Self or Spirit (*Atman*).¹⁵

In reality, you are not the body, but, on the contrary, you are the creator of your body, which is nothing but the externalization of your thought-form. You have manufactured it as a dwelling-house to live in and to gain experience in this world of phenomena. Therefore, it is your creation, and its future is entirely in your own hands. You need not give thanks to anybody; but thank yourself, if you wish. Here you should remember that you are not Mr. or Mrs. or Miss So-and-so, but that you are the Spirit, which is divine and perfect. You cannot have any sickness or any kind of disorder or ill-health; on the other hand, you should always manifest normal functions of life and vital energy. All these normal activities are distorted by the wrong idea that you are the body, that you were born, and that you are going to die. This is the greatest error or delusion. You, the eternal Spirit, were never born and will never die. You are birthless and deathless. You must not think that you will become immortal after death. This would

¹⁵ Sankara has dealt skilfully with this subject in his *Commentary on Nescience (Adhyasa-bhasyam)* in the *Brahmasutra* of Vyasa. He puts, 'Atyantaviviktayor-dharmadharminor-mithyajnananimuttah satyanrite muthu-nikriya ahamidam mamedamuti naisargiko'yam lokavyavaharah'. At last he concludes, by stating: 'Evamayamanadi-rananto-naisargiko'dhyaso mithyapratyayarupah kartritvabhoktritva-pravartakah sarvalokapratyakhah Asvanarthahetoh prahanaya atmaikatva-vidyapratipattaye sarve Vedanta arabhyanite.'

be impossible, if you were not immortal even now. This grand truth is the keynote of the Vedanta philosophy. You do not have to believe in any scriptural statements. It is the eternal Truth. Be convinced of this Truth at this very moment and you will see that you are above all imperfections and delusions¹⁶.

The science of spiritual healing admits the fact that each living soul possesses the power of healing, and that the mind has the power to stimulate any part of the body, relieve pain and produce the most perfect anæsthesia. It can create anti-toxin against any kind of poison, if admitted in the system, so long as it has normal and healthy conditions of the organic functions, to help its actions against poison and germs of diseases. A living soul can produce chemical changes in the system by creating necessary acids and alkalis.

Suppose that the patient is weak and unable to produce the anti-toxins, acids, and alkalis by his own initiative. In such cases, powerful suggestions from another healthy mind of the healer might produce the same effect in the system of the patient. The power of such a suggestion has an influence upon the subconscious activities. Of course, the oral suggestions are more effective than the silent ones. It is a kind of reflex or unconscious action which remedies the disorder. The healer's influence might come from a great distance. But distance does not hinder the power of thought, as the individual minds are connected by the undercurrent of one eternal cosmic mind. This is the secret of what is called the *Absent Treatment*

III

HEALING BY DISCARNATE SPIRIT

The science of spiritual healing tells us that as one human mind can influence another mind on the human plane, so the mind of a discarnate spirit can influence our mind. There have been authentic cases of cure, caused by the influence of discarnate spirits. All such cases have been recorded in the journals of the Physical Research Society where proper diagnoses have

¹⁶ There is a difference between the words, *delusion* and *illusion*, as the former admits the phenomenal existence of a thing, whereas the latter denies all existences.

been made and correct remedies suggested by disembodied spirits.

Sometimes incurable cases, given up as hopeless by medical practitioners and mental healers of all kinds, have been cured by the intervention of the discarnate spirits. The spiritualists of all countries are familiar with many such cases. Then again, there are healers, who work under direct spirit control and perform marvellous cures through the guidance of the discarnate minds. But the patients, of course, do not know how the healing is done.

This method of healing by the power of the disembodied mind or the spirit have been recognized and upheld by all great religions of the world. It is very strong among the Roman Catholics. They believe that the spirits of departed saints have the power of curing the incurable diseases. Saint Rita performs miraculous cures of impossible cases. There are such saints in all religions. On praying to any one of them, the spirit of that saint will produce wonderful cures. This belief is also prevalent among the Hindus, the Buddhists, and the Mohammedans.

Thus prayer is another method by which healing can be done. But you must not pray like that old lady who prayed for the mountain to move away. She had a house at the foot of a hill in Europe, and she wanted to have a backyard. So she went to her room which had a window facing the hill. She pulled down the shades and sat there a few minutes and prayed, saying: 'O mountain, be thou removed and cast into the sea.' She asserted and repeated it a few times, and closed her eyes, and meditated upon it. Then, after a few minutes, she wanted to see what happened. She went to the window, and pulled up the shade, and exclaimed: 'I knew all the time that the mountain would be there.' You see, that kind of prayer would not do any good. She was thinking that the mountain would remain there, and, at the same time, that the praying would move the mountain away. If she had real faith, it might have moved. A great many people pray to the Lord: 'O Lord, do this thing and do that thing', but, at the same time, in their inner consciousness they know that it is not going to be. Such a thought is an obstruction and naturally no effect is produced. Therefore, we must learn how to pray. Jesus said: "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray,

believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*'.¹ 'That whosoever shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith'.²

An earnest prayer with strong desire has cured many hopeless cases. I heard a noted healer say that once he prayed earnestly for twenty-two hours steadily, until the disease was cured. The sacrament of extreme unction at the time of death might produce wonderful effects, if the prayers of the priest are not mere lip prayers, and, if they are not dead, but alive with unselfish love, true devotion, and unbounded faith.

The faith-healers have performed most wonderful cures through the miraculous power of faith. But the blind faith-healing does not produce a lasting or permanent result. Because it does not destroy the darkness by the light of wisdom. Right faith, however, when attended with the correct understanding of the truth, removes the causes of error, and produces lasting results. The blind faith-cures are often done at Lourdes in France and in other sacred places all over the world, where people go with various kinds of ailments and come out healed. Sometimes instantaneous healing is done, as the power of true faith is manifested. That is, when individual consciousness and convictions are changed into something which is in perfect harmony with the unchangeable Truth, then faith, attended with the right knowledge of the absolute Spirit, will produce wonderful effect instantly upon the physical and the mental conditions of the patient. Therefore, instantaneous healing is a natural thing.

Thus, we see that the science of healing includes all these various methods, but insists that in order to gain the correct method of spiritual healing, one should enter into the superconscious state and commune with the divine Spirit which has all the powers of healing, and then manifest perfect health in the body and the mind. By entering into that state and communing with the true Spirit, we will realize the truth that we are no longer mortals, that we are not afflicted by any disease, that we are not sick, that we have no fear of death, and that we are immortal. Vedanta teaches: 'While we are here we must

¹ St. Mark, XI, 24

² Ibid, XI, 23

know this (*Atman*); if we do not know, there is great harm. Those who know it become immortal, but others suffer pain indeed'.³ 'Whoever has found and understood the Self that has entered this physical body, he indeed is the Creator, for he is the maker of everything, his is the world, and he is the world itself'.⁴ 'Evil does not overcome him, he overcomes evil; evil does not burn him, he burns all evil' 'Free from evil, free from doubt, the perfect soul becomes the knower of Truth (*Brahman*)'.⁵

Science of spiritual healing thus explains the power of the Spirit over the mind and the matter, and that each living soul, being the image or reflection of the divine Spirit, is the true healer within us. At present we are all deluded by the charms and attractions of the material world and the objects of senses; but, however deluded we may be at the present moment, if we can once, even for a second, overcome this self-delusion and forgetfulness of our all-powerful Spirit, and remove from our consciousness the mistaken notion that we are mortal bodies, we will instantaneously be free from all sickness, sorrow, disease, and death, and shall be able to help others by bringing them out of the darkness of ignorance into the light of the self-effulgent Spirit which is the abode of perfect health

³ *Ihava santo'tha vidmastadvayam na chedavedirmahati vinastih, Ye tadviduramritaste bhavantiyathetare dukkhamevapriyanti*—The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV 4. 14

⁴ *Yasyanuviitah pratibuddha Atmo'smin sandehye gahane pravishtah; Sa visvakrit sa hi sarvasya karta tasya lokah sa u loka eva.*—Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV 4. 13

⁵ *'Atmani evatmanam pashyati, sarvatmanam pashyati, nainam papna tarati, sarvam papnanam tarati, nainam papna tapati, vipapo ivrajo vichikitso vichikitso brahmano bhavati*—Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV. 4. 23.

is distinct from matter and material forces, and they trace the origin of all diseases and ill-health to organic disorders, to physical conditions, to dietetic effects, to climatic influences, to the violation of the hygienic laws and to microbes and bacteria.

It is true that in many cases, diseases arise from these physical and physiological conditions. It is also true that perfect health is to be found in bodies where the organic functions are normal and food and drink are properly digested, the hygienic laws are observed, and the system is strong enough to remove all the imperfections and to kill all the microbes and bacteria, which are constantly attacking our organism. Recent scientific investigations have proved that many of the causes, which impair our health, are brought about by improper food eaten. Some of the advanced hygienists and dietitians have gone so far as to declare that most of the diseases can be cured simply by regulating what we eat and drink. Right food brings health and beauty, while wrong food causes indigestion, ill-health, bad circulation of blood, bad temper, and neurasthenia (which is, in reality, nothing but the brain or nerve hunger).

Now we are told what kind of food should be used by brain workers and what by manual labourers. The idea is that whatever chemical properties our system requires, and whatever makes us efficient in different lines of work, we must supply in the form of food and drink. The food experts of this age, after examining the chemical properties of various kinds of meat, fish, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and cereals, have divided them into five different classes: (1) vital or nerve or brain foods—meat, fish, game, poultry, and dairy food; (2) blood purifying, cooling, laxative—fresh vegetables and fruits; (3) non-nourishing vegetables and greens such as spinach, parsley, watercress, salad, cucumber, etc., which, when combined with vital food, produce harmonious effects in the system; (4) acid fruits like lemon, orange, grape, fruit, tomatoes; (5) starchy food that nourishes muscles and generates muscular strength such as cereals—wheat, rice, oatmeal, etc.

The proper combination of these different kinds of food in right proportion, according to the climate and season, will help us all in retaining the physical health when once it is acquired. Rev. Dr. Talmage wrote: "Many a man is trying to

do by prayer what can only be done by correct diet". There is some truth in this statement, because a great many people think that they can use the power of the mind, and can digest this sort of indigestible stuff. But this is a mistake. It would be a waste of mental power. Why should we use our mental energy in that line when we can achieve greater results by lesser effort? The value of this noble principle should be understood. Mr. Edison, the inventor, had a long life with good health, and frequently he used to say: "I keep my health by dieting. The diet is the secret of my health, and it is a religion with me". In truth, it has been a religion with many people who understand the dietetic laws.

Sometimes the combination of food-stuff, that we take, is injurious. We must know that there are certain kinds of food that can be digested in one hour, another in two hours, another in three hours, and another in four or five hours. An improper mixture of these different kinds of food will cause a disorder in the stomach. The digestive organs will first pick out the kind, which will be digested in one hour, while the other kinds will take their turn, and will go through fermentation before they are digested. Again, if the food-stuff remains in the stomach without going through the process of digestion, it does not produce proper nourishment, but, on the contrary, it creates all kinds of trouble. A great many people, however, do not understand the law of digestion, and, therefore, they suffer from different kinds of ailment.

There are some extremists, however, who think that by correcting food and drink, all diseases can be cured. Of course, there are food cranks, like cranks in any other line of thought, who go from one extreme to another. There are many instances of men and women who were once in the habit of living mostly on the animal flesh and who suddenly gave up meat diet and went to another extreme and tried to live upon non-nourishing diet. Their system began to starve and, in a short time, it was completely ruined. I have known some people who suffered terribly from such a sudden change and the result was disastrous to their health. It brought on all kinds of trouble. I knew a crank who got an idea that to drink water was the worst thing for health, so he stopped entirely from drinking it. After a month he was reduced to a skeleton,

and, in a short time, he was at the point of death. Such fanatics are to be found in all parts of the world. They go from one extreme to another.

There are some people, again, who think that they can cure all diseases and gain perfect health by long fasting. But continuous fasting is just as injurious as over-eating, because it leads to starvation. In starvation, the vital energy which is stored in the system in the form of fat and other substances, is used up. Gradually the tissues will live upon tissues to gain their strength, and eventually all muscles will wither and fade away in a short time. But proper method of fasting will produce beneficial result.¹ It will eliminate all the impurities of the system. One should drink plenty of water, at least two quarts every day. The water, being the source of our life, is always needed in the system. This is one of the principal conditions for gaining good health.

Others believe that fletcherism or mastication of any kind of food, however wrong it may be, will cure all diseases. This is another error, although it must be admitted that proper mastication is a great aid to digestion. Perfect health is to be found when the physical conditions and the organic functions are normal, and this can be gained through proper selection and combination of right food and drink, good digestion, assimilation, and cleanliness. Cleanliness means not only external cleanliness (not merely washing the face and hands with a little soap and water), but cleanliness of the whole body, externally and internally, and that cleanliness will remove all impure matter from the system.

Our skin also breathes. In fact, every part of our system breathes, and, if the body is covered up with dirt, the organic functions will be obstructed. Therefore the whole system should always be kept clean. Cleanliness is the secret of a beautiful figure and complexion. The sparkling eyes, with a spotless complexion, are the signs of good blood and good health, and, if these are blended with abundance of vital energy, then the possessor of these must be regarded as the ideal of perfect physical health.

¹ J. J. Walsh says "Fasting was always recognized as an extremely valuable adjunct in the control of passions, and the poor, if they do not fast often, have often insufficient food. The bodily passions, especially those related to sex, are particularly likely to be influenced by overfeeding"

As proper food, observance of hygienic laws, physical exercise, and correct breathing, are helpful secrets of making the favourable conditions, under which it is possible to acquire good physical health, so they also exercise a great influence upon the mental conditions of the individual. Food and drink have a great deal to do with our temper, thoughts, disposition, and character. A man who sits for hours in a stuffy room in his office, generally feels dull, irritable, and melancholy, because his liver gets out of order and, then he becomes cross. He comes tired and exhausted, and he does not know what the matter with him is. Perhaps he has eaten something which would require hard physical labour and outdoor exercise. But he did not know that. Sometimes bad temper and irritable disposition are caused by the eating of too many eggs. Excessive amount of sulphur in the yoke of eggs takes away appetite.

The correct food, when properly combined and thoroughly digested, brings efficiency to the brain for success in business. The old story that the battle of Leipzig was lost through indigestion, caused by a tough leg of mutton, has some truth in it. The clear thoughts, insight into business problems, and quick actions with concentration, are some of the results of the right living. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that we should understand what our system needs, and what we ought to supply. Mere thought of perfect health alone will not do. We must make the proper conditions, under which we can enjoy perfect health.

Nowadays, we find that a great many of the ideas that have been held very sacred in India from ancient times, are beginning to become popular in the Western civilized world. For example, the regulation of diet will help young men and women to control their passions and sex desires. People should understand this, and should educate their children from the very early life to know what kind of food is to be taken. There are some kinds of food which would increase our passionate nature. We should not indulge in those things. There are other kinds of food which are cooling and soothing, and would make the mental and organic functions harmonious. The latter kinds of food would bring peace to the mind and health to the body. It would produce a quiet disposition, and then, we shall be able to enjoy life.

The people of America are just beginning to wake up to the truths of eugenics, and sanitary marriage laws are now enforced in some of the states. Undoubtedly, it will be a great boon to future generations. All these are indispensable for the acquirement of a healthy body. In India, among the Hindu people, these laws have been observed from time immemorial.

Professor Schenk has discovered how to control the sex of offsprings by special diet, but this idea was taught in India from the vedic period. The ancient masters of India knew how to control the sex of children, by regulating the diet. In the United States of America the hygienic laws are scrupulously observed in the dairy farms. The farmers have learnt to treat their cows properly, and in certain places, they almost worship the cows. They fan them with the electric fans, and shoo the flies off their backs, just as the Indian farmers do in India. This cleanliness is absolutely necessary to protect milk, cream, and butter from all kinds of germs of disease which they absorb. Untill lately ignorant missionaries and the so-called apostles of the Western civilization have ridiculed the Hindu people of India, because they have observed these sanitary laws religiously in their dairy farms. They condemned this custom, and called the Hindus heathen, idolators and worshippers of cows. With a loud noise, they tried to civilize them by converting them into their own faith. But now those heathen customs are adopted in civilized America.

Again the so-called caste rules which were condemned by missionaries, are now enforced in railroad trains and public places, by introducing the individual drinking cups for all, to stop the spread of contagious diseases and to protect the health of the ignorant public. Thus, the civilized world is just learning the truth of the ancient customs of the Hindus, and the scientists with their microscopes are helping them to understand the sanitary laws of perfect health. In India, religion was brought into every phase of life, even in the dairy farms, and in the treatment of cows. It is all religion with them. But they use the word *dharma*, which means *law*; hence, religion means 'laws of life' and also 'moral and spiritual laws'. The Hindu observed all these laws which they taught their children, and naturally, the effect was wonderful. But, as we grow wiser through the study of the scientific truths and through the

understanding of physical, mental, and moral laws, we begin to correct our errors and mistakes, and march toward the enjoyment of perfect health.

But here the question arises: Who is going to enjoy perfect health: the body or some intelligent substance? Who is going to regulate the organic functions and to remove all these imperfections which obstruct the normal activities of the organs? Who is going to digest properly the food and drink, to extract nourishment from it, to transmute it into nervous energy, thought-force, and will-power? Who is going to produce a harmonious development of the organs, and who will kill the microbes and the bacteria that are constantly entering into our system through food and drink, air and water? The advocates of the materialistic theory of life who do not believe in the existence of a soul, say that the result of a harmonious combination of the unintelligent matter and the material forces will produce thoughts and do these wonderful things. Further, they believe that the combination of matter will produce the power of digesting food and of converting it into nervous energy, thought-force, will-power, and intelligence. They do not feel the necessity of admitting the existence of a conscious and intelligent entity which is not the chemical product of insentient matter and material forces, governed by the mechanical laws of nature. They do not stop for a moment to think whether or not the effect of such a combination of unintelligent matter and material forces which are constantly changing, can ever produce life and enjoyment of perfect health. The medical practitioners are extremely busy in repairing the building, and patching up imperfections, without knowing who the builder is, and without comprehending the aims and powers of that architect. In fact, they deny the existence of the real architect. They do not know that the soul is the architect of the fleshy tabernacle, which is called 'the human body'. They think that the body is produced by the unintelligent forces of nature, and the soul, the real architect, is the result of all these material forces. In short, they think that matter and the material forces are the architect, and in this way, they deny the status of the soul.

In the first place, we should learn who this architect is, who has built this dwelling-house which we call the physical

body, and why the architect makes errors in building this house ; and then, if we find that the soul commits mistakes simply through the spell of ignorance, we should learn to educate it, to open its eyes, and make it see things in their truest light. Otherwise, it will continue to make mistakes again and again, no matter what drugs are given to it by the medical practitioners. The medical practitioners believe in the materialistic theory of life.

Socrates once said: 'Men were foolish to try to heal the body without healing the soul. The soul is the mind as well as the source. The soul makes the body. The soul is the cause, and the body the effect'. An unhealthy soul or a *dis-eased* (uneasy) soul cannot produce a healthy body, nor can it enjoy perfect health. It may be surrounded by the best specialists for all diseases, who may give very valuable advices. It may have all the drugs and remedies of the world at its disposal, but still it will not enjoy perfect health, if it be diseased or unhealthy. The food and drink, entering into the system, will create poison instead of nourishment, and will produce ailments instead of perfect health. The medical science of the present day does not recognize this fact, because it is based on erroneous theories and materialistic principles. The doctors and the physicians do not understand the relation between the soul and the body. They try to find out the causes on the physical plane, but they ignore the existence of the causes in the *dis-ease* of the soul. They think that diseases of the physical body are caused by the physical conditions and that the physical body manufactures the soul ; but, in reality, the soul manufactures the physical body. The argument which tries to prove that the soul is created by the physical body, is as absurd as the argument which tries to establish the value of putting the cart before the horse.

Within our gross physical body, there is a subtle body which is called by different names. Some call it the natural or spiritual body, others the mortal body, while the Theosophists say, it is the astral body. It is composed of finer particles of matter. It is ethereal in form, and is governed by the finer forces of nature. It may be called the under-garment of the soul, while the outer garment is the gross physical body. This subtle body consists of the mental and the sense powers and of

those forces which give strength and vitality to the internal organs and perform all the functions of those organs. It is produced by the life-force or the *prana*, as it is called in Sanskrit. The *prana* means the vital energy of the universe, or that which keeps all beings alive. The *prana* is neither the oxygen, nor the electricity. It is not the same as any of the physico-chemical forces that we know, but is distinct from them. It governs them, directs them, regulates them, and controls them. We cannot deny the power of the *prana*, for it is manifested in each one of us. We are inseparable from it, and live by it, whether we know it or not. It serves its functions when all other physico-chemical forces are in abeyance, and this force of the *prana* governs the subtle body and manufactures the physical body. If the subtle body is normal, the organic functions are normal, and the result is perfect health. But if the vibrations of this *prana* be abnormal, then the activities of the subtle body will also become abnormal, and the pathological conditions will arise, and manifest themselves in the form of ailments or diseases. The word 'disease' literally means *dis-ease*, i.e. an uneasy state of the body, hence it is pain or suffering. But the real feeling of pain or suffering is not in the gross physical body, but in the subtle body. A true physician, therefore, should not only trace the physical causes of a disease, but should understand the relation between the subtle body and the gross physical body, and should learn the conditions, under which this subtle body is acting, and whether those conditions are favourable or unfavourable, whether or not the subtle body is in a normal state.

He is not a true physician who merely pours poisonous drugs into the system of a patient, and then waits for the result, as if he were going to make an experiment; but he is a true physician, who diagnoses the pathological conditions of the disease in the subtle body, and understands them thoroughly. Modern medical science, as it stands now, is in its experimental stage. It is not yet perfected, as we all know. What is good and beneficial in one case, may produce pernicious effects in the case of another. That particular dose of drug or medicine, which helps one, will not perhaps help another constitution. We must not forget that as two faces are never exactly alike, so two constitutions, two minds, two subtle bodies, and two

individual souls are not absolutely the same, and this fact puts many difficulties in the path of one who is trying to practise medicine. How enormous are the difficulties and how overwhelming are the conditions, which medical science must overcome in order to reach perfection! And who can tell, when that state will be reached.

The medical practitioners should first of all find out the psychic conditions of the subtle body. We all know that the artificial mode of living, worry, anxiety, hard competition, failure in business, and unnatural food are the banes of modern civilization. Worry causes many diseases, such as the heart trouble, the lung trouble, the kidney trouble, the Bright's diseases, and other disorders, from which people are suffering; and these causes will not be removed until the physician has learnt the normal and the abnormal conditions of the subtle body of the patient. The highest end and aim of life have now become material prosperity, and everybody is struggling hard to gain success in business at any cost. What result does that state of mind produce? We never think of this. How can one expect to enjoy the perfect health, when one's ideal is material prosperity, and when one is obliged to sacrifice one's moral and spiritual life upon the altar of earthly ambition and material gain?

The constant thought of material objects drags the soul down on the plane of the gross matter, and produces the abnormal mental states and creates disease of the mind and the body. It exerts a degenerating influence upon the soul. The more we think of the material objects, the further we are away from the spiritual abode of the perfect health. The continuous thought of the body and the matter weakens the will-power, and the soul then seeks help from the matter and the material conditions. It enslaves the soul to the physical body, and makes it attached to the environmental conditions. Through its delusive power, we mistake the body for the soul, and the matter for the spirit.¹ Is there any state more deplorable than this self-delusion? Are we the same as the physical body? No, we are not. But at present, we have become one with the physical body. A little change in the atmosphere produces a

¹ Sankara has described it in the *Adhyasa-bhashyam* as '*atasmintad-buddhih*', i.e. we take falsity as truth.

change in us. The other day I was talking to a friend of mine, and he said: "Why, I feel every change in the atmosphere so much. What is my condition?" I said: "Your condition is like that of the thermometer, like the globular mercury, rising up and going down. You have no control over your own system." We have become almost like thermometers. A little change in the weather will make us sneeze. If we stay in a draft, we have grippe. Think of the deplorable state to which we have reduced ourselves. Can we wonder why people who live this way, do not enjoy a perfect health?

Here let me ask: Who catches cold? Who suffers from indigestion?" Neither the spirit nor the dead matter of the body can catch cold, or have indigestion. If matter had the feeling of pain, then the dead body would also suffer. There must be something which stands between the spirit and the matter, and which enjoys or suffers. It is the subtle body or the mind that feels and suffers. The mind is the ruler, director, and organizer of the physical body. The true sign of perfect health is to be found at the moment, when one does not think of the body, and when one does not feel its existence in particular. When one is not specially conscious of any particular organ or limb, then that is the sign of perfect health of that part. Aches and pains drag the soul down and confine and focus its consciousness to one particular spot, but when we have no special consciousness of any organ or limb, we have neither ache nor pain. When we are not aware of our bodies, we enjoy perfect health. When the body seems to be buoyant, lighter, as it were, than the air we breathe, without any sensation of pain and ache at that time, the soul is freed from its slavery to the body. If we arrive at a state when we do not feel the cravings of the physical organism and the screaming of the cells and tissues of the body (aches and pains) which disturb the peace and tranquility of the soul, then, we have attained to perfect health.

Perfect health is not the ideal of spirituality, but is an essential condition, under which the consciousness of our true spirit can come. It is not the same as Godconsciousness or the highest spiritual realization, but it is the desirable state, under which one can attain to Godconsciousness. Ordinary people think that perfect health is the highest end of everything and

that there is nothing beyond. The Christian Scientists will perhaps say that it is the ideal of spiritual realization, but, according to a Yogi, there is a difference. He says that, when the body and the mind are in a state of perfect health and when we are not specially conscious of our physical bodies, we can hold the undisturbed thought of the supreme Spirit. So long as our consciousness is confined to a particular spot in the body, we cannot withdraw our mind and fix it upon our true Self, and we cannot, therefore, attain to Godconsciousness. A Yogi says that perfect health is essential for the attainment of spiritual perfection, which means Godconsciousness.

By perfect health it is not meant merely the strength or the vigour of the physical body, but it means the state of equilibrium between the vital currents and all organic functions. It is a harmony between the internal nature and the external nature, between the mental and the physical bodies, and between the activities of the subtle and the gross bodies. This state of the absolute harmony is not the goal of spiritual perfection. If physical health were the goal of spirituality, then the lower animals, and the savages must be highly spiritual. We know that the lower animals and the savages do not have any of the diseases of civilized men or women. They live under the trees, eat raw food, and enjoy perfect health; but they cannot be considered highly spiritual. Therefore we should not mix these two ideals and mistake the one for the other. It should be understood that perfect health makes one well-fitted for the attainment of spiritual perfection.

According to the Hindu medical science, *Ayurveda* (which is far older than the occidental medical science), diseases are divided into four general classes: First, *agantuka*, i.e. those produced by external causes (such as blow or hurt), which are ordinarily called accidents. Secondly, *sharira*, i.e., internal organic disorders. Thirdly, *manasa*, i.e., those caused by mental conditions, such as, anger, hatred, worry, sorrow, jealousy, malice, envy, lust, passion, ambition, greed, fear, egotism, despondency. Here you will notice that from the very ancient times all these mental conditions have been considered as abnormal states, which cause changes in the system and which have their physical counterparts known as various diseases. They should never be encouraged, for they poison the system. Fourthly,

svabhavika, i.e. those produced by the natural causes, such as, hunger, thirst, old age, sleep, and so on.

It is said that perfect health is at the root of success in life, of the fulfilment of all desires, as also of the attainment of the highest spiritual realization and the absolute freedom of the soul, while diseases are the enemies of these as well as of prosperity and earthly existence. Therefore, we should try to cure all diseases and strive for perfect health. This body is considered to be the boat, which will carry us to the other shore of the sea of earthly life. A Yogi says that perfect health must be acquired first, and, in order to gain it, we must control our minds and make the mental functions normal, then harmonize the mental activities with the organic movements and the vital currents, by adopting a right mode of living. When that harmony is established, there will be no more aches and pains, and the physical body will be free from all diseases.

Some people suffer from the diseases which are caused by the violation of the hygienic laws. It creates disturbance first in the subtle body, then in the physical organism, and finally appears in the form of a disease. Some people reap the results of the evil thoughts and evil deeds of their previous lives, when they are born diseased or when diseases suddenly attack them. Sometimes the diseases are in the blood. But, why should one inherit such blood? What guides inheritance? There must be a law behind it. The diseased souls (egoes) gravitate toward similar parents since the law is: Like attracts the like. For this reason, we may say that those, who are born diseased, are expiating the sins or mistakes, which they committed in their previous incarnations.

Perfect health can be acquired by those who live the right kind of life and who understand the natural laws, which govern our earthly existence. In order to attain it, one should practice those exercises which will develop the vital currents and restore the nervous energy. Ordinarily, we do not pay attention to the fact that more we store away the nervous energy, the stronger we become, and then we are able to fight against all the unfavourable environmental conditions. If we have nerve strength in us, and if we have abundance of vital energy or the *prana* within us, then, our organism can kill the microbes and destroy all the bacteria. But we do not know how to store

away that energy in the nerve-centres of our system. We must learn these methods, and when we have practised them, we shall enjoy perfect health.

If an unhealthy person can realize, for a moment, the true nature of the Spirit, he will instantly gain access to the abode of perfect health. Correct breathing, right thinking, and right living will help to purify our body and mind. There is a great deal of truth in the saying: "What thou thinkest, thou shalt become". If your thoughts are abnormal, then the pathological conditions will arise, and the organic disorders will be the result ; but if you think constantly of the ideal of perfect health and never pay attention to diseases or aches and pains, then, you are sure to have a healthy body. Whenever there is an organic trouble, we must withdraw our mind from that part of the system, and try to think of the ideal of perfect health, and deny the existence of pain. The stronger the pain there is, the greater should be the effort of the soul to rise above it ; and the higher the soul rises above the consciousness of the disorder, the weaker and less powerful the disease will become. If you make a few experiments for yourself, you will be convinced of this great secret of health. Learn how to withdraw your mind from where there is an ache or pain, and fix it upon the highest ideal of perfect health, and then, you will notice that your aches and pains have become less and less. But if you think of your pain strongly and nurse it by applying different so-called remedies, you are strengthening it and making it worse. Do not increase the diseased condition, by admitting its existence, but bring the thought of perfect health to recover the normal state. The more you think of your disease, the worse it will become. This is a great truth, known all over the world, and it is now understood and preached by all the Mental Healers, Divine Healers, and Christian Scientists in the West. They have simply put a commercial value upon it, but this truth is universal. It cannot be monopolized by any particular kind of healer.

The mind has the power to cure disease, and, in fact, the healing power exists in every individual. This healing power can be strengthened and increased by correct breathing and right thinking. Ordinarily, people do not breathe properly and pay no attention to their mental conditions, but encourage

hatred, jealousy, malice, greed, lust, fear, and other destructive forces ; and they do not realize that all these produce the abnormal activities of the subtle body first and then, of the organic functions, and, consequently, they suffer. Therefore, instead of encouraging those causes of the abnormal conditions of the mind and the body, we should encourage good thoughts, and develop friendliness or feeling of love, mercy, truthfulness, kindness, purity, and chastity.

Understand this truth first, and demonstrate it in your own life, and then teach your children the secret of attaining perfect health. Do not allow your children to think of diseases in any other way than, as mere abnormal conditions of the mind and the body, that they last only for a short time, and that they pass away by right thinking and right living. At the same time, give them the ideal of perfect health, that is, a healthy body, a healthy mind, and a healthy soul. Tell them to think that they are the children of immortal Bliss and of absolute perfection.

Whoever thinks of the absolute perfection, will surely attain to a healthy mind and a healthy body. All the abnormal mental states like anger, hatred, jealousy, malice, fear, passion, greed, vanity, pride, self-conceit, and egotism are the diseases of the mind. Therefore these should never be cultivated. They poison the system and create wrong vibration in the atmosphere of the place, and influence other minds. A great disturbance in a family or in a community is caused by such destructive thought currents. Therefore cultivate the opposite constructive thoughts, which will bring health, prosperity, and happiness. These are the birthright of every individual.

Once more let me remind you that perfect physical health is merely the means to an end. It is not the ultimate ideal of our being. But it is the proper physical condition, under which the highest spiritual realization is possible. Science of perfect health teaches that spiritual perfection is attained when the body-idea vanishes and is entirely swept away from one's relative consciousness. When the soul lives like a disembodied Spirit (*Atman*), even while dwelling in a body on this earth, he is above all diseases. How can there be a disease, when the soul lives on the plane of divine consciousness ? This state is called the *jvanmukti*, i.e. the liberation of the soul from sorrow,

suffering, disease, and death even in this life. In this state, the body may be cut or torn to pieces, but the liberated soul is not conscious of it, and remains undisturbed in the midst of terrible torture. There have been many instances in India of such perfected souls like Krishna, Buddha, Ramakrishna, and others, who reached this perfect freedom, after starting in their journey with a healthy body and a healthy mind.

The soul that has realized this absolute liberation, feels that the gross material body is a limitation, a bondage, and an imprisonment. The ancient Hindu Science of Life (*Ayurveda*) tells us that the body-consciousness is a disease of the soul, and that, when one becomes free from this bondage of a limited body, one attains to Godconsciousness. Therefore the body-idea must vanish and the true and immortal nature of the soul must be realized ; for such a realization, the first requisite is perfect health.

APPENDIX

SCIENCE OF MYSTERY

The province of this science is to explain the mysteries of life and death and to describe the finer forces of nature which operate in the universe. So long as these forces are unknown, the effects produced by them are regarded as the mysteries of nature. But that which is mysterious for the ignorant masses, is natural for the wise ones who have studied the sciences of mystery.

According to this science, life was not created from non-life or the dead matter where life did not exist. If we admit that life has come out of non-life, then we will make the blunder that something has come out of nothing', which is an impossibility. For the same reason creation of matter out of nothing is an absurd theory. With the help of the torch-light of this science we can penetrate the mysteries of nature, and understand that life and matter are uncreatable and eternal. Before the evolution of the world, life and matter existed in the body of the infinite Being from the beginningless past as the unmanifested primordial energy. It contained in its bosom the potentiality of all phenomena of the suns, moons, stars, planets, vegetables, animals, and human beings which had existed in the previous cycle of evolution. All those manifested phenomena went back to the causal state of the universe by the reverse process of evolution which is called 'involution'. Everything went to deep sleep, as it were, and remained in that state of universal rest for a long period extending through millions of years. Nothing was lost in this involutionary process. Life and matter remained undifferentiated in the causal state, called in Sanskrit the *Prakriti* (Latin *Procreatrix*), which means the creative energy.

Then began evolution of the *Prakriti* through the spiritual influx of the infinite spirit. The unmanifested *Prakriti* began to manifest in the forms of life and matter (in Sanskrit *Prana* and *akasha*). From this state emanated the infinite germs of the living substance, as the sparks emanate from the huge bonfire

and passing through the gradual process of cosmic evolution, appear as the vegetables, the animals, and lastly as the human beings.

THIS state is beautifully described in the oldest scriptures of the world: "Before the beginning of evolution of the world there was neither non-entity, nor entity, neither atmosphere, nor sky beyond. There was neither death, nor, therefore, immortality, nor day and night. That one breathed breathless by itself in essence. There was nothing different from it, nor beyond it. From this germ of life burst forth the mighty productive powers, nature below and energy above." Rīg Veda X, Hymn 129). Again elsewhere in the *Upanishad*, it is said: "From this undifferentiated absolute Being evolved the *prana* (vital force), mind, sense powers, ether, heat, all that is gaseous, liquid and solid" (*Mundaka Upanishad*, II, 13.). Thus science of mystery describes the origin of life and matter as well as the building of the cosmic bodies through the process of gradual evolution of the cosmic energy or the *Prakriti*. Furthermore it tells us that all the existing planets and planetary systems will eventually return to their causal state once more through the process of involution. Nothing will be lost or annihilated. The period or cycle of evolution is followed by a period or cycle of involution, which again is followed by another cycle of evolution, and so it goes on throughout eternity.

These process of evolution and involution makes the history of the world of change, and it also discloses the fact that amidst the changes, there exists a changeless constant substance, from which everything evolves, in which everything is nourished and in which everything rests after dissolution. This unchanging substance is the background of this world of appearance, and it is the *Atman*, or the Brahman which should be achieved, and which should be taken as a permanent shelter or refuge. The *Atman* is the only real principle or substance, and other than it everything is unreal. Vedanta calls it the source of everything, as everything phenomenal evolves and rests upon it. Science of mystery discloses this grand truth and consoles everyone who strives for attaining to the immortal truth.

THE MYSTERY OF DEATH
A STUDY IN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION
OF THE KATHA UPANISHAD

CHRONOLOGY OF THE LECTURES ON THE KATHA UPANISHAD DELIVERED BY THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER	I.	On	January	2nd, 1906
"	II.	"	"	9th "
"	III.	"	"	16th "
"	IV.	"	"	23rd "
"	V.	"	"	30th "
"	VI.	"	February	6th "
"	VII.	"	"	13th "
"	VIII.	"	"	20th "
"	IX.	"	"	27th "
"	X.	"	March	6th "
"	XI.	"	"	13th "
"	XII.	"	"	20th "
"	XIII.	"	"	27th "
"	XIV.	"	April	3rd "
"	XV.	"	"	10th "
"	XVI.	"	"	17th "
"	XVII.	"	"	24th "
"	XVIII.	"	May	1st "
"	XIX.	"	"	8th "

PREFACE

The Mystery of Death was delivered serially as class lectures before the American students and audiences from the 2nd January, 1906 to the 8th May, 1906. Nineteen lectures were delivered with the central thought and philosophy of the *Katha Upanishad*. Some erroneously take it as a book on the Science of Spiritualism i.e., the science and whereabouts of the departed souls, and the details of the spirit-world (*paraloka* or *pretaloka*), but, in truth, it is a book on philosophy and religion of the *Katha Upanishad*, along with the sacred dialogue between Nachiketa, the seeker after the divine Truth, and Yama, the Ruler of Death. Swami Abhedananda has given in this book a systematic discussion on the religious and philosophical thoughts of ancient India.

It is interesting to mention in this connection that it seems that Swami Abhedananda has selected the title, *The Mystery of Death*, of the book, being inspired by the essay on *the Secret of Death* by Ralph Waldo Emerson and also by the essay or the book, entitled *The Secret of Death* by Sir Edwin Arnold. Emerson imbibed the sublime thoughts and ideas of the *Gita*, *Upanishad* and Vedanta, and specially he was inspired in the upanishadic thoughts by the philosopher, Schopenhauer. Emerson was also inspired by the philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita* by Carlyle. However, let me quote some of the lines of the lecture: *Ralph Waldo Emerson's Poem 'Brahm'*, delivered by Swami Abhedananda in New York on April 4, 1921, before the American audience, which will throw some light on the matter. The Swami says: "In his essay on *Immortality*, Emerson quotes from one of these *Upanishads*, a portion of the Veda, that is the earliest treatise on the Vedanta philosophy. He takes the translation of the *Katha Upanishad* into his essay and incorporates it. It is entitled, *The Secret of Death*. It was afterwards translated by Sir Edwin Arnold under the title, *The Secret of Death*. It begins with the story that a young man who was a seeker after truth was sent to the abode of death, and he asked questions about what happens after death. * *". It seems that the Swami has slightly changed the title given by

both Ralph Waldo Emerson and Sir Edwin Arnold, and has selected the title of his book on religion and philosophy of the *Katha Upanishad* as *The Mystery of Death*. The lecture on "Ralph Waldo Emerson's Poem Brahms" has been printed as an *Appendix I* to Swami Abhedananda's new book, *Thoughts on Sankhya, Buddhism and Vedanta*.

The *Katha Upanishad* belongs to the Krishna-Yajurveda i.e. it is the *Upanishad* or the rationalistic philosophy and religion of the Yajurveda. This *Upanishad* contains two main chapters, and in the first chapter there are three dialogues with seventy-two *slokas*, and three dialogues with fortyeight *slokas*. The *Upanishads* are known as the revelation of the eternal Truth which was revealed in the purified hearts of the vedic Rishis. The seers of ancient India practised the spiritual *sadhana* and saw in their ecstatic vision the eternal unchangeable Truth, and this Truth was preserved through ages. In ancient India, the vedic and the upanishadic texts (treatises) were orally transmitted from generation to generation. The sincere students used to take lessons of the upanishadic texts staying long at the preceptors' houses. Gradually the texts of the *Upanishads* were written on the leaves of trees, or on the dry barks of trees, and when paper was invented, they were put in paper.

The *Upanishad* teaches the truth which is universal and spiritual. The *Upanishad* teaches that truth is one, but it is manifested in manifold ways. The self-revealed truth of the *Upanishad* says that ordinary men live in the den of delusion, and so they make themselves enchained with the attachment of the worldly things. They are rather the toys in the hand of nescience (*ajnana*), but when their minds are sufficiently purified by *vichara*, their plays of games in the world of contingencies and delusion are ended, and they realize the absolute Truth which eternally resides in their hearts. They then come to know that by their desires and attachment to the deceitful worldly things they have created an eternal cycle of births and rebirths which entails a limitless chain of ascends and descends, from which there is no escape for them, until and unless they cut asunder the chain of delusion, or *maya* which has made them forget their innermost immortal essence. The sublime teachings of the *Upanishad* lead them to the path of escape from the den of delusion, and enlighten them to realize

the changing nature of the worldly things as well as the unchanging nature of the absolute consciousness which is known in the *Upanishad* as the *Atman*, or the Brahman. This realization of the *Atman*, or the Brahman comes when men are awakened from the sleep of nescience (*ajnana*).

Now, what do we mean by the word '*Upanishad*'? Swami Abhedananda has thrown sufficient light upon the term, and says that "the *Upanishad* is that which destroys the ignorance and superstition of the individual soul", or "that which guides the individual soul towards the attainment of the highest wisdom and perfection", or "that which slackens the attachment to our material bodies and to earthly conditions and to the material world". Sankara and the commentators also interpreted the word *Upanishad* in these three main ways. They have said that the word *Upanishad* does not connote the idea of a particular book, or some definite books, but it connotes the idea of collection of wisdom and truth which are eternal, uncontradicted and permanent all the time. The *Upanishad* is a self-revealed truth which discloses the mystery of the absolute unchangeable Truth. Swami Abhedananda also says that the *Upanishad* is the "collected wisdom which is eternal and uncreated by human agency. * * It emanates from God; it is God; it is the highest of our life".

Sankaracharya has said that the *Upanishad* is the *moksha-shastra* or the Brahma-vidya, because it reveals the immediate knowledge or awareness of the Brahman. Sankara says that those who are sincere seekers after the absolute Truth, and those who have purified their hearts not by the process of the suppression of manifold desires (i.e. mind), but by transforming the desires into the pure consciousness (*shuddha-chaitanya*), really go beyond all doubts, all bindings and also beyond the cycle of births and rebirths forever and ever, and they realize the transcending Brahman. Sankara mentions in one of the commentaries:

सदेर्धातोर्विशरणस्त्वसादनार्थस्य उपनिषदस्य विषयप्रत्ययान्तस्य रूपमिदं 'उपनिषद्'
इति । उपनिषच्छब्देन च व्याख्येयमित्यसिद्ध-ग्रन्थ-प्रतिपाद्यवेद्य-वस्तुविषया विद्योच्यते ।
केन पुनरर्थयोगेन उपनिषच्छब्देन विद्योच्यते इति ? उच्यते, ये सुमुखो दृष्टानुश्रविक-
विषयवितृष्णाः सन्तः उपनिषच्छब्दवाच्या वक्ष्यमाणलक्षणा विद्यामुपस्योपगम्य

तन्निष्ठतया निश्चयेन क्षीलयन्ति, तेषामविद्यादेः संसारबीजस्य विशारणाद्विसनाद् विनाशात् इत्यनेनार्थयोगेन विद्योपनिषदितुमर्हति । * * इति ब्रह्मसंहितायां योगाद्ब्रह्मविद्या उपनिषद् ।

The subject-matter (*vishaya*) of the *Upanishad* is the Parabrahman, the highest unchangeable Truth. The utility or importance (*prayojana*) lies in the utter extinction of the fire of worldly desires and simultaneous attainment of the supramental knowledge. The connection (*samvandha*) between the seeker of the Truth and the *Upanishad* is also well-established by the supreme divine goal. Sankara has mentioned:

विषयश्च विशिष्ट उक्तो विद्यायाः परं ब्रह्म प्रत्यगात्मभूतम् । प्रयोजनश्चास्या उपनिषद्
आयन्ति कीं संसारनिवृत्तिर्ब्रह्मप्राप्तिलक्षणा । सम्बन्धश्चैवम्भूतप्रयोजनेनोक्तः । अतो
यथोक्ताधिकारि-विषय-प्रयोजन-सम्बन्धाया विद्यायाः करतलन्यस्तामलकवत् प्रकाशकत्वेन
विशिष्टाधिकारि-विषय-प्रयोजन-सम्बन्धा एता वल्लयो भवन्तीति ।

Again, the *Katha Upanishad* belongs to the recension (*shakha*) of the vedic *Katha* community. The Vedas are four in number, and they are Rik, Sama, Yajuh and Atharva. But these four Vedas are divided into different recensions (*shakhas*) according to different vedic branches connected with different clans. Though the real aim and object of the various clans and communities were to perform the religious rites (*shatras*) and sacrifices (*yajna*), yet their *mantras*, their methods and materials of offerings of the oblations and their particulars of performances were different from one another. Again from the evidences of the Vedas and the Brahmanas we know that each clan and community adopted different meters, *mantras*, texts and injunctions of the Vedas, suitable to their purpose. Different grammars were also composed for the different vedic recensions and they were known as the *Shikshas* and the *Pratishakhyas*. The portion of the Vedas which describes the rituals and ceremonies, is called the *karmakanda*, and that which teaches renunciation, discrimination or discriminative knowledge and the nature of the highest Truth, is called the *jnanakanda*. The *Upanishads* are mainly included in the spiritualistic portion (*jnanakanda*).

of the Vedas. It should be remembered that each Veda and the *upa*-Veda contain different *Upanishads*.

The *Upanishads* form the foundation of the Vedanta philosophy in India. Sadananda Yati says in the *Vedantasara* that the name *Upanishad* signifies 'Vedanta' as—"*vedantonam-upanishadpramanam*", and the *Sutras* by Vyasa and the *Shariraka-bhasya* by Sankara are helpful to the study of the *Upanishads* "*tadupakarini sharirakasutradini cha*" Swami Abhedananda says that in the *Upanishads* you will find the germs of the beautiful philosophy of Vedanta. The *Upanishads* are like the grapes and the Vedanta philosophy is like the essence squeezed out of those grapes. The Vedanta philosophy is based upon the teachings of the *Upanishads*, but the Vedanta philosophy is more systematised and rational. The *Upanishads*, being the revealed truths of the ecstatic visions of the vedic Rishis, are very simple and sublime.

The *Katha Upanishad* relates the story and dialogues of Nachiketa and Yama, the Ruler of Death, and through their dialogues we come to know the mystery of the afterworld (*paraloka*), law of *karma*, the destiny of men and of all the living beings, the Providence, the absolute Truth and its undying nature, renunciation and love for knowledge and truth. The *Katha Upanishad* begins with the story which may not be out and out historical, but it explains the nature of faith and reason of the human beings, their spiritual hunger and also their highest aim of life. Nachiketa was a rare questioner and student and Yama, the Ruler of Death, was a unique spiritual teacher. Nachiketa was a real seeker after truth, and he was strictly cross-examined by the self-realized teacher, the Ruler of Death. The Ruler of Death enquired whether Nachiketa wanted the pleasures of the delusive world, or the permanent pleasure and peace of the Divine realization, and when he came to know that Nachiketa was really a seeker after the absolute Truth and the eternal happiness, then he sanctioned his long-cherished boons, and opened his spiritual eyes for transparent vision of the self-revealing Brahman-knowledge. Nachiketa was repeatedly tempted by the Ruler of Death, but was not moved by any of his master's temptations, and so he succeeded in receiving the blessings of the Ruler of Death, and that blessings enabled him to drink deep the nectar of

immortality, and to escape eternally from the cycle of delusion.

Now the beautiful story of Nachiketa and Yama further teaches us that whosoever becomes a sincere soul, or whosoever renounces everything for the sake of the highest Truth, is suited to get the fruitful consequence and his life's mystery is solved once for all, and he becomes the living God on this earth. Every man should be free from the fear of death and he should remember that this material body is the temple of God the Absolute. His duty will be to reach God the Absolute, not to be attached to the temple, the body. His longing and aspiration will be to realize the innermost essence, and not to wander about the outward world. Yama, the Ruler of Death, realized himself the absolute Truth, and so it was possible for him to grant so easily Nachiketa's cherished boon. In the *Upanishad*, it has been said that he who is Brahman himself, can only confer the blessings of the Brahman, and none else. So all seekers of Truth should approach first the realized Guru, and then be sincere in his asking of the highest Truth.

Swami Abhedananda was the direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He sat at the holy feet of his wonderful Master, and got the key to unlock the mystery of the immortal life and celestial bliss. Being a man of Divine realization, the Swami's writings and speeches breathe the air of spiritual thoughts and ideas that animate and elevate the level of consciousness of all human beings. He has represented the central philosophy of the *Katha Upanishad* in a very beautiful way, in lucid language. He has discussed about the subjects like the changeable and the unchangeable aspects of the world and the Absolute, the knowledge of the Absolute, the ego and the true self, the ego, self and sensation, the divine element in us, the realm of immortality, unity in variety, the purification of the soul, the oneness amidst the manifold, the phenomenal universe and the Brahman, and the beginning of the realization. These are also the central ideas and the essence of all the philosophies of both the East and the West, and all the seekers after Truth of all the countries of the world are absolutely concerned with these vital questions and problems to be solved in their religious and spiritual life.

Viewing from the phenomenal standpoint Swami Abhedananda

nanda has said that this world of thoughts and deeds bears a pragmatic value and importance in the lives of them who live, move and have their beings in it, but from the transcendental viewpoint the world of appearance has no value except its ground, the *Atman*, which pervades and permeates the world: "*ishā vasyam idam sarvam yat kincha jagatyam jagat*". The Advaita Vedānta philosophy says that this phenomenal world is constituted out of space, time and causation, which are the categories of the nescience or *maya* and, therefore, the world of phenomena is subject to change. So, while describing the unreality of the relative existence of the phenomenal world, Swami Abhedananda says: "Within the realm of this duality, we cannot find anything that is absolutely unchangeable and permanent. This relative existence is subject to change. How far does this relative existence extend? It extends as far as there is space, and as far as there is time, and that which is absolute or unchangeable, is not within the realm of time and space, but it transcends them both" (chapter IV).

While discussing about time and space in *An Introduction to Transcendental Logic*, Immanuel Kant has described them as the *pure intuitions*, because, according to Kant, time and space as the pure intuitions are independent of the nature of the perceived objects, whereas the empirical intuitions like red, white, extension, solidity, etc. are the actual objects of perception. Kant has interlinked intuitions with the concepts, which are also divided into two, pure and empirical. According to Kant, an intuition is only a mental image, and time and space are the pure intuitions which are the mental products, and are directly apprehended by the mind itself. The Advaita Vedānta philosophy considers the mind or *Antahkarana* as the internal organ, and so time and space, according to the followers of Advaita Vedānta, are the objects of senses, and so time and space are not absolutely independent of the nature of the perceived objects, as Kant holds. The Vedānta philosophy further recognizes time and space as the categories of nescience or *maya*, and, therefore, they have decay and change.

Swami Abhedananda has defined time and space in a new and novel way. He says: "Now, what is time and space? Time is nothing but that interval which exists between two ideas. One idea arises in our mind, and another idea follows it, and

that succession or the interval between the two ideas is called 'time'. Space means 'co-existence'. That is, if you think of yourself as standing or sitting here and think at the same time of some other point which is outside of yourself, and if you hold these two thoughts, that which separates them, is called 'space'. Consequently time and space both depend upon the existence of our mental condition" (chapter IV). So we find that though time and space are purely the psychic contents (space is recognized sometimes as a psycho-material content) and are perceived by the mental, yet they are considered as the phenomenal ones, being the inherent ingredients of the phenomenal universe. Swami Abhedananda has said that when you analyse in that way, you find "that everything in the phenomenal world is within time and space, but if you can go beyond time and space, you rise above your mental states. So long as there is time, there is space, there is the mental activity on the phenomenal plane, and if you rise above time and space, you come to the absolute reality that is unconditional and that has neither beginning, nor end" (chapter IV). In truth, if we even imagine the existence of time and space in the Absolute or the *Atman*, then the *Atman* will fall short of its transcendent nature, and will be an object of the sense perception like a gross material object. But the Vedanta philosophy says that the *Atman*, or the Brahman, is not apprehended by any sense, nor even by intellect or reason, but it is experienced by the supersensible divine feeling or intuition (*anubhuti*), which is absolutely devoid of the tripartite principles of the knower (*jnata*), the knowledge (*jnana*) and the known (*jneya*). The *Katha Upanishad* calls it the only, existent something—"astityevopalabdhvavyah" and "*narva vacha na manasa praptum shakyo no chakshusha*".

Swami Abhedananda says that the *Katha Upanishad* has given an explanation of the realm of immortality which transcends the limits of time, space and causality, and that immortal realm is the *Atman*, where there remains no nescience or *maya*. The *Katha Upanishad* has compared this charming phenomenal world with a fig tree (*Ashvattha-vriksha*—*Ficus Indica*) which has its root upward and branches downwards: "*urdhamulo'vashakha esho'shvatthah sanatanah*", i.e. this fig tree of the phenomenal universe is not destructible and impermanent, but is everlasting and eternal. But the very word '*vriksha*' connotes

the idea of impermanence (*anitya*), and it appears as permanent for its all-pervading, immortal and eternal root (*mula*), the *Atman*, or the Brahman. The Advaita Vedanta philosophy also says about the nature of the phenomenal world as '*anadi kintu shanta*' i.e. eternal, but limited. Swami Abhedananda says: "In other words, those who can see the root of this tree of the phenomenal universe and, instead of being attracted by the flowers and fruits and leaves and branches, can go to the root or source and are able to reach the plane of immortality" (chapter XVI). Now what does the nature of immortality or the immortal life signify? This question was asked by Nachiketa, the seeker after the real Self, and this is also the vital question of all the seekers after Truth of all the nations of the world. The Swami says that the *Atman*, or the Brahman, is the nature of the unchangeable absolute Reality, and it remains perfect and unchangeable amidst all the changes of the phenomenal universe. "After the dissolution of the phenomenal universe", says Swami Abhedananda, "everything will remain latent in the seed form. Our bodies may be reduced to their elements, to atoms and molecules, and to forces of nature. Our souls, however, will remain perfect, or remain intact, and will not be annihilated, or dissolved, or destroyed, but will continue to exist, and retain all the powers and desires and tendencies, which they possess * * *". The vedantic idea is this that after the dissolution (*pralaya*) everything of the universe remains latent in seed form in the womb of the *Prakriti*, the primordial energy, and this eternal *Prakriti*, or the undifferentiated consciousness (*Avyakta*), together with the prime consciousness, is the self-shining pure Brahman and is known as *Isvara*, who co-exists with the causal nescience and at the same time transcends it. When evolution begins, the latent seeds of the universe are manifested first in the subtle form, and then in the gross form. The subtle form of the phenomenal universe is known as the Hiranyagarbha (-Brahman), and the gross form of it is known as the Virata, and they are known as the assuming second and first principles. *Isvara* is known as the so-called third principle, and the *nishkala* (partless) *vishuddha* (pure) Brahman is known as the assuming fourth principle. But, in fact, the transcendent Brahman is absolutely raised above the category of the fourth principle, as this assum-

ing category of the fourth principle is recognized as no other than an element of the nescience or *maya*, whereas the absolute Brahman transcends the limit of *maya*. This transcendent Brahman is the only desirable object (*shreyah*) to be obtained or achieved, and all other objects (*preyas*), other than the absolute Brahman, should be shunned or rejected. Nachiketa realized this truth very well, and so he rejected all the boons other than the boon of the knowledge of the Brahman (*brahmajana*).

In the chapter XVII of this book, while explaining the secret of the world as the result of the vibrations: "*yadādam kincha jagat sarvām prāṇa ejaṭi nihsṛitam*", Swami Abhedananda says that all the animate and the inanimate objects of the universe are nothing but the result or product of the vibrations of the *prāṇa*, or the vital force. This vibrations of the *prāṇa* are at the root or source of the tree of the universe, and they are also the cause of the world appearance. The *Upanishad* says that this *prāṇa* is the cosmic life-principle, and it produces the motion or vibration of creation or projection (*sṛishti*). Now this *prāṇa* has been described in the Vedānta philosophy as Hiranyagarbha Brahma, who creates, nay, projects everything from within. All the impressions (*samskāras*) of the past incarnation of every being and object remain buried in the subconscious bed of the *Avyakta* or the undifferentiated consciousness, and when necessary, Hiranyagarbha Brahma projects them as before: "*śūrya-chandṛmasau dhātā yathā pūrvamākālpayāt*" (Rig Veda). The seekers after Truth also approach to the absolute indeterminate (*nirguṇa*) Brahman first from Virata to Hiranyagarbha, then from Hiranyagarbha to Isvara, and then from Isvara (determinate or *saguna* Brahman) to the indeterminate Brahman. This gradual progress towards the highest Brahman can be said to be three paths of the spiritual illumination, known as dualism, qualified non-dualism and non-dualism or monism.

Swami Abhedananda says that philosophy and religion of the *Katha Upanishad* teach to concentrate in one point and that leads to the attainment of Godconsciousness, the be-all and end-all of all the human beings. But for the attainment of that highest and noblest Truth, an able self-realized teacher or *Guru* is required, as Nachiketa was fortunate to get the Ruler

of Death (Yama) as his self-realized spiritual preceptor or *Guru*. The *Katha Upanishad* (1.2.7,5) says,

श्रवणायापि बहुभिर्यो न लभ्यः शृण्वन्तोऽपि बहवो यं न विद्युः ।
आदत्तयौ वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्धाऽश्रयौ ज्ञाता कुशलानुशिष्टः ॥

That is, of that, which is not attained for mere hearing by many, and which many do not know even while hearing (the teachings of the self-knowledge), the expounder or teacher is wonderful and the receiver or student or disciple is wonderful, and wonderful is he who knows (the knowledge of the Self), being instructed by a proficient realized teacher. Otherwise living in the midst of ignorance (*'avidyayamantare vartamanah'*) and considering themselves intelligent and wise, the senseless ignorant people go round and round, following the crooked courses, just like the blind led by the blind (*'andhenaiva niyamana yathandhah'*). Really when a blind man is led by another blind man on an uneven road, it happens that both of them come to a great calamity, both of them fall into a ditch. So these who have not attained to the self-realization (*atmajnana*) and live in the darkness of ignorance, cannot show the path of immortality. So in the field of spiritual practice (*adhyatma sadhana*) all kinds of blind faith, sentiment and prejudice should be abandoned and the help of a real self-realized teacher or *Guru* should be sought for entering into the eternal abode of self-realization. Because the wise ones describe the path to self-realization to be inaccessible as razor's edge, which when sharpened, is difficult to tread on: "*kshurasya dhara nishita duratyaya, durgam pathastat kavayo vadanti*". So he who thirsts for the super-sensible divine knowledge of the Self or *Atman*, should be very cautious to tread on the path of immortality. The deluded ones see always the outer things and not the inner or indwelling Self, and the senses are always outgoing by their nature (*paranchi khani*), so a rare discriminating man, desiring for immortality, turns his eyes away and then sees the indwelling Self. Therefore we shall not be deluded by the fleeting show of the world appearance. The fleeting enjoyment and happiness of the material world seem however sweet and pleasing at the outset, but in future they bring unto men bondage and sufferings. So we shall con-

centrate our mind upon the *Atman*, meditate upon it, and shall enter into the state of superconsciousness (*samadhi*), to catch glimpse of the Self that shines as one without the second. The *Katha Upanishad* says that whosoever will follow the path of Nachiketa, will attain to the same goal of the Self-knowledge: “*anyo’pyevam ye vidadhyatmameva*”, and whosoever will realize the absolute Brahman as eternal within his heart, will become immortal in the end, and will transcend the realm of death.

It is to mention that we have critically edited the lectures which were delivered extempore and was taken down by the stenographers in 1906. Some footnotes have been added to make explicit the discussions of the Swami. We have also added the Sanskrit texts of the *Katha Upanishad* and some of the portions of Sankara’s commentaries and Anandagiri’s glossaries in the footnotes, where necessary.

SWAMI PRAJNANANANDA

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

What is the *Upanishad*,—*Karmakanda* and *Jnanakanda* of the Vedas,—The vedic rituals,—The *Pitris* and the *Devas*, heavens and desires,—An eternal hell,—All the knowledge depends upon comparison,—The duration of pleasure,—We cannot enjoy pleasure throughout eternity,—The bloody sacrifice,—The rationalistic portion of the Vedas,—All thoughts and works are limited by time and space,—The word 'eternal',—The theory of creation,—The *Upanishads* are revealed wisdom,—Sankaracharya,—The seven notes of Indian music,—What the *Upanishads* describe,—The meaning of the *Upanishad*,—Divine wisdom emanates from God,—Renunciation,—The highest pleasure,—The soul-life,—Character is our companion,—The self-control,—The true being,—The story of Nachiketa,—The promise of his father,—Nachiketa went to the abode of the Ruler of Death (Yama),—The offer of boons,—The first boon,—The second boon,—The third boon,—The next boon was offered,—Man can never be happy by wealth and possession.

CHAPTER II

THE RULER OF DEATH

A man lives after his death,—Curiosity-mongers will never reach the highest goal,—The departed spirits,—What is the real truth,—All the pleasures of life are transitory,—The conception of different kinds of heavens,—Heavens are *projections* of our own ideas,—Even dreams are realities,—The world is like a dream,—Each perception is different,—Everything depends upon comparison,—Doubts of the *devas* and the bright-spirits,—Two courses of action,—Happiness independent of sense relations,—The absolute goodness,—Pessimism,—Good and evil,—Ideals of the East and the West,—The paths of knowledge and ignorance,

—Misfortune is the great teacher,—Our way of depending differs,—The two paths are opposite,—True knowledge,—The path of immortality,—The victims of self-deception,—Death has a certain realm,—Death means the *change*,—Search for the inner light,—The real nature of the soul.

CHAPTER III

DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

The self-deluded men,—Death presupposes birth,—Eternal perdition,—Heaven and hell,—Christian conception of heaven,—Significance of the 'eternal',—Different grades of pleasure,—Implication of the 'immortal',—The physical bodies are subject to death,—What is deathless immortal thing,—The spiritual and the immortal body,—The change of mental or thought forms,—The subtle body,—We are immortal by birth-right,—The wonderful teacher and the student,—Book-learning,—The ordinary mortals,—The spiritualist's defect,—The seekers after Truth,—The immortal part of our body,—The extreme longing for truth,—The highest end of life,—The personal God,—The Absolute,—The realm of the departed,—The abode of immortality,—The domain of the Absolute.

CHAPTER IV

THE ABODE OF DEATH

The last boon,—what exists after death,—The virtue and vice,—The realm of phenomenal relativity,—The *conditional existence*,—The dual existence of the world,—What is time and space,—What is beyond the categories of time and space,—The ideal of the scriptures,—When shall we attain the Reality,—The spiritual urge,—The eternal Word,—Our desires spring from the infinite source,—The cravings for flesh,—The worship of Truth,—Pleasure and peace,—The blissfulness,—The absolute ground of the universe,—How can we understand the support of the universe,—The ordinary men,—We are all craving for happiness,—The body and the soul,—Science about the change,—Our bodies are always changing,—The realized souls,—Immortal nature is our birthright,—Everything is indestructible,—Spirit-communication,—The process of death,—We create

our own destinies,—The true self is itself formless,—We are the children of Bliss,—All suffering springs from ignorance,—What is salvation.

CHAPTER V

THE CHANGEABLE AND THE UNCHANGEABLE

The basis of our being,—The reality behind the objective world,—The *maya*,—Evolution implies *change*,—The materialistic thinkers,—The soul or ego,—The immortality is the foundation of all religions,—The empirical changes,—The Sakshi,—Constant quantity is not within the realm of sense perception,—The terms *percept* and *concept*,—Truth is revealed by itself,—The provinces of philosophy and science,—What do we mean by *Atman*,—The strongest proof of our immortal nature,—What do we mean by *consciousness*,—What are the intermediate changes,—Does our soul or the *Atman* grow or die,—What is *perfection*,—The words *birthless* and *deathless*,—What is *tamas*,—Omniscience is our birth-right,—When does the *revelation* come,—The essence of God is the same as the essence of the *Atman*,—What is immortality,—Emerson on *Brahman*,—The germ of life,—The conception of space,—Our constant quantity is local yet universal,—The space never moves,—The *Atman* is without change.

CHAPTER VI

KNOWLEDGE OF THE ABSOLUTE

A preliminary knowledge of the Absolute,—Realization involves hard struggle,—What is the flash of realization,—What are the thoughts,—Scientific and intellectual pursuit of the Absolute,—The desire is the cause of suffering even after death,—Mere hearing of the sermons is not the same as realization,—Love means *attraction* of the soul,—Human love is a reflection of divine love,—The knock must proceed from intense longing,—The longing for the highest,—God is love, and love is God,—God is the highest good of divine realization,—We should check all our wicked habits,—Turn your mind away from the world,—This life has its purpose,—When our mind will be in peace,—Godliness as the ornament of our character,—Christ and

the crucifixion,—What is a true religion,—The attainment of *samadhi*,—The ego and the consciousness,—What is the value of gold,—The Absolute swallows up everything,—Colour is nothing but a certain state of vibration,—We project our sensations into the eternal world,—Withdraw your mind from the senses,—What is character,—Destiny and future,—Two selves have entered into the cave of the heart,—The relation between two birds, the ego and the Soul,—The word 'image',—The body is like a chariot,—We should analyse our own self,—When can perfection be reached.

CHAPTER VII

THE EGO AND THE TRUE SELF

Questions that face us in our pursuit of the mystery of death,—The individual ego and God,—The true nature of God,—Image is no other than the ego,—The Western minds about the idea of the image of God,—The anthropomorphic conception of God,—The ego is no other than the Spirit,—God himself is sinless,—The Swedenborgians about the soul,—The ego is called the mediator,—Christ does not mean any ordinary human being,—The soul is eternal,—The body and the soul,—The mortal man is in reality an immortal entity,—The horse and the rider,—What is discrimination,—Impure thoughts,—Right knowledge brings everlasting bliss,—What is the sure way to prosperity,—What do we mean by 'perfection',—The highest end of life,—Belief in a God is not necessary for salvation, but for right knowledge.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EGO, SELF AND SENSATION

We know everything when we know our true self,—The dualistic idea of God,—God is not far from us,—the higher self and the Anglo-Saxon self,—India has always stood for the divine knowledge,—Science about God,—The analysis of our sense perceptions and mental conditions,—What happens when we see a colour,—What is a *concept*,—What is a sound,—The mental process,—Beyond everything there shines the *Atman*,—What are the *sensations*,—The mind-stuff,—The power of attention,

—The *percept* and *concept*,—The sensation,—Ego and the sense of 'I',—The cosmic ego,—The analysis of the sense of ego,—Different personalities,—The sense of 'I' is not the ultimate Reality,—What is energy,—Energy produces various kinds of forces,—What does the cosmic ego signify,—The *Purusha* and the Self,—The cosmic ego and God,—The *Purusha* and the *Brahman*,—By knowing ourselves we know God,—What is the standard of knowledge.

CHAPTER IX

THE DIVINE ELEMENT IN US

The process of grasping the true nature of the Self,—What is the ego,—The limit of our *I*-consciousness,—The ego is subject to change,—The higher conception of God,—God is the soul of the universe,—Death means *change*,—What is an *evolution*,—The idea of resurrection,—India about the immortal self,—The vedantic idea of the passage—God created man in His own image,—God cannot be known by the mind,—God, the Brahman,—Man is the highest experiment of the evolutionary process,—The human plane is better,—The sharp intellect is the only means to the God-realization,—Ordinary mortals are deluded,—The change and the unchangeable self,—We must start from the gross physical body first,—Merge the words into thoughts,—The real Self has no sense of 'I'—What is '*death*',—What are sounds,—What is colour,—We cannot even possess our own bodies,—A story of a sage,—What is Godconsciousness,—What does a realized man understand.

CHAPTER X

THE IMMORTAL SELF

The universal spirit,—Our minds are dragging outward,—The self-existent One,—The condition of an ordinary man,—The change of the world,—The unchangeable something,—What does the word '*death*' signify,—The subtle body,—What are heavens,—The science of music,—There is something within us,—What is immortality,—How can we become immortal,—The brain is nothing but an instrument,—The true Self is the source of all knowledge,—What part is immortal in us,—The true Self is the knower of all the mental states,—The true Self is infinite.

CHAPTER XI

THE REALM OF IMMORTALITY

The three states of consciousness,—All the changes are witnessed by the *Atman*,—The Self is not affected by any empirical change,—What is 'honey',—The sense of '*P*',—All living creatures are like the centers,—We cannot limit the field of souls,—The self-conscious entity possesses nothing material,—Death can only take the body,—The First-Born Lord,—Each individual ego is the receptacle of the cosmic consciousness,—The Absolute is not very far from us,—The life-force or *Prana*,—Unity in variety,—The fire was the symbol of the bright-spirit,—The control over the *Prana*,—The fire as considered by different nations,—The solar energy,—The visible and the invisible words,—What does the sun represent.

CHAPTER XII

UNITY IN VARIETY

The field of ordinary knowledge,—Most people live on the surface,—The cause produces effect,—What are we going to gain in this life,—What does the modern science teach,—Desires are great powers,—Nature has many laws,—Everything is governed by the law of Nature,—The experiences of the world,—The one force of Nature,—The analysis of the phenomenal universe,—Mind has tremendous power,—Ignorance,—The immortal substance in us,—All things do not look alike,—The higher knowledge,—Love means expression of oneness,—Knowledge and delusion,—Going beyond death and ignorance,—What do we mean by 'heart',—Knowledge is strength,—The divine unity.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BODY AND THE SOUL

Human body is like a palace,—Sense powers are like door-keepers,—What do we mean by *meditation*,—The idea of salvation,—Perfection must be reached here in this earth,—In each body there is a king,—The eternal truth is beyond time and space,—The nature of the soul,—The materialistic theory of

CHAPTER XVII

THE WORLD AS THE RESULT OF VIBRATIONS

The root is the absolute Brahman,—The word *prana*,—Fire and electricity,—What is colour and sound,—The analysis of perception,—A wise man,—God does not mourn over anything,—The vibration is the cause of the universe,—The laws of the *prana*,—Intelligence and life go together,—Motion and life,—What does science explain,—The vibration of the *prana*,—Everything phenomenal is relative,—The power of *prana*,—What can death do,—The terror of Brahman,—The Governor of the universe.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE END OF WORLDLINESS MEANS THE BEGINNING OF REALIZATION

The present is the best,—The attainment of immortality,—The Angelic plane,—The *Brahmaloka*,—The realm of the ancestor,—The aim of human life,—The fear of death proceeds from ignorance,—What does Vedanta teach,—What is God,—What does the *Upanishad* say,—The analysis of our being,—Intellect,—Brahma, Isvar and the Brahman,—The undifferentiated energy,—The human soul,—Nothing is lost in this world,—Beyond the energy lies the highest,—Which is the goal of all religions,—The Brahman cannot be realized by anything phenomenal,—What does Christ signify,—The state of *samadhi*,—Do not expect to reach perfection in the state of rash,—What do we mean by Yoga,—The state of Yoga

CHAPTER XIX

REALIZATION OF THE ABSOLUTE

Where does the Yoga practice lead,—What do we mean by an *appearance*,—All contradictions are relative,—The thought fails to reach the Absolute,—The Absolute is an existence,—The *sunyata*,—The *suchness*,—The *yanas* of the Buddhists,—Where lies our existence,—What becomes in the state of *samadhi*,—The Godconsciousness,—The material body is an instrument of the Self,—Realization of the Brahman,—The Raja Yoga,—The true self is very minute,—Divine illumination,—The conqueror of the mind,—The realization of the Absolute.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The most ancient writings on the Vedanta philosophy are the *Upanishads*, which form the knowledge portion of the Vedas, the holy scriptures of the Hindus. These Vedas are the oldest scriptures in the world, older than the Old Testament, older than the Zend Avesta and other scriptures of the world.

The word 'Veda' is derived from the Sanskrit root, *vid*—'to know', and means knowledge or wisdom. And the literal meaning of the term Veda is the collective wisdom of the ancient Seers of Truth, who lived in India during the vedic times. The wisdom of those hoary sages was spoken out in Sanskrit, the language of the gods, and it was handed down through generations by memory.

Long before the art of writing was known to the world, these revealed truths existed under the title of Veda and afterwards when the art of writing was discovered, they were written down and arranged into books. There are many volumes of these Vedas, which can be divided into two grand parts. The one may be called the ritualistic portion or *karmakanda* and the other the knowledge portion or *jnanakanda*.

The ritualistic portion of the Vedas describes the various rites and ceremonies which are necessary for the attainment of earthly pleasure and celestial happiness. The main object of the vedic rituals was to direct the human souls to the highest felicity of heaven.

Long before any other nation had any conception of heaven, these great vedic Seers of Truth had realized that there were such realms as heavens (*svarga*), which they described in glowing terms. According to the conception of the vedic Seers, there are many heavens which afford different kinds of celestial pleasure. For instance, there is the realm of the *pitris* or souls of the departed ancestors. In this heaven, the departed souls meet their relatives, and enjoy the fruits of their good thoughts and good deeds after death. Their stay in the *pitriloka* or the heaven of the ancestors continues for an indefinite period

of time. The realm of the *devas* or bright spirits or angels is another heaven and so on. The modern spiritualistic ideal of meeting friends and enjoying with them all the pleasures of heaven is not a new one. It had originated in India long before other nations discovered it. So it is an old belief, and there is some truth in it, because these heavens are nothing but the realms which we enter according to our own thoughts and desires. Into these realms, we go to have our desires fulfilled. If we have a special desire for a certain kind of pleasure on this earth, we may get it, but we may not be satisfied. That unsatisfied desire clings to us even after death, and we continue to desire the same thing, and crave for the same kind of pleasure even after death. That desire will take us wherever it can be fulfilled. If that desire be of a very earthly nature, gross, material or sensuous, it will force the soul to come back on this earth. Otherwise, if the desire be of a refined character, the soul will have to go to such realm as is mentioned in the Vedas

All these heavens are meant for those who have lived a virtuous and righteous life on this earth. But, in those ancient times, the Seers did not believe in an eternal hell. The idea of a hell or of an eternal punishment did not strike their minds. On the contrary, they believed in the law of cause and sequence. Even in the earliest scriptures, we find the belief in this law of cause and sequence, that is, the law of *karma*. According to this inevitable law, those who have lived wicked and unrighteous lives, will come back to expiate for their wicked deeds on this plane, and be born again and again until they have learnt the law through hard experiences, and are ready for higher life and gradual perfection. So, in the ritualistic portion of the Vedas, various sacrifices, rites, ceremonies and works, which lead to heavens, are described. The philanthropic works *i.e.* works done through unselfishness and disinterested love and the results they bring to the souls after death, are graphically described in the *karmakanda* or ritualistic portion of the Vedas.

The difference between the enjoyment in a heaven and that on this earth is only a difference of degree, and not of kind. In our earthly experience, we find that pleasure is always attended with some kind of pain and suffering. If we

do not have the feeling of pain or suffering, we cannot enjoy pleasure. Pleasure would be no pleasure, if it continued for ever. That is a thing which a very few people understand. All our knowledge or happiness depends upon comparison. If we have no opposite experience, we cannot enjoy. And it is for this reason that in the description of the Christian heaven, you will find that there is a thin transparent wall between the place of enjoyment and the place of punishment, so that those who go to heaven, would see the miserable condition and suffering of the sinners, and thus by comparison could relish their own felicity or enjoyment. This is, of course, a very crude way of expressing the same truth that all enjoyment or pleasure depends upon comparison. However, the real truth is that every kind of pleasure is related to the feeling of some kind of pain. But the duration of pleasure and happiness in this earth is very limited, while the duration of pain is greater than that of pleasure or happiness. It may be just the opposite in heaven. In heaven, the duration of pleasure or happiness would be longer than that of pain or suffering, but even in heaven, there is some kind of suffering in some form or other. If there be no immediate suffering, there is a fear of losing pleasure, and that fear is often so strong with the inmates of heavenly regions that it makes them unhappy. There are stories where these *devas* or angels are made unhappy simply because some mortals on this plane are becoming extremely virtuous, and they are afraid of losing their higher position and of being deprived of their powers, fearing that these mortals would take possession of their powers and their pleasures. Such stories are to be found in the Hindu scriptures.

However, it is a fact that we cannot enjoy one pleasure throughout eternity, and even if we could, we would not be happy, because there would be no occasion for comparison and that would make us feel monotonous. For instance, if we sing the praise of the Lord as it is the occupation in the Christian heaven all our life and do not have any other variety, we would not enjoy that long. Playing long and long on a particular harp would not make us happy, and that is the reason why there are so many different kinds of celestial realms, described in the Vedas, so that there would be no monotony about the pleasure, and that people would have more variety, by going

from one realm to another, and would enjoy perhaps greater degree of pleasure in one heaven than in another. All these things as well as various sacrifices are described in the ritualistic portion of the Vedas.

The Hindus of the vedic period used to have animal sacrifices, as in the Old Testament, we find the ancient Jews used to sacrifice animals to propitiate their Deity. But later on, those bloody sacrifices among the Hindus were stopped. The idea was at that time that they would not eat any animal food without offering it to their gods. They had tribal gods or personified spiritual forces, who governed the various aspects of physical nature, and whenever they sought help of those gods, they used to offer them propitiatory sacrifices. But in course of time, the Hindus outgrew such primitive conceptions, and abandoned bloody sacrifices.

The rationalistic portion of the Vedas came into existence when these ancient Seers of Truth realized the conditions under which celestial pleasures could be enjoyed, and discovered that those pleasures were the results of good thoughts and good deeds which men perform during their earthly career. As all thoughts and works are limited by time and space, so they could not produce a result, unlimited by time and space. Following the rules of logical reasoning, they understood that a finite cause must produce a finite result, and that an eternal effect is only possible, when the cause is eternal and not otherwise. There is no work or thought which is unlimited by time and space, consequently its result, however great it may be, must be finite or limited by time and space. The celestial pleasure can neither be eternal nor unlimited by time and space. The word 'eternal' is generally used in the sense of that which is beginningless and endless. When we say 'time is eternal', what we mean is that 'time is beginningless and endless'. If it had any beginning, it would not be eternal. Sometime, however, this term refers to an indefinite period of time.

If those celestial pleasures were eternal, their causes must be eternal too. But the cause, as we have seen, are nothing but good thoughts and good deeds, which can never be eternal, because they are limited by time and space as well as by the individual capacity of the worker and thinker, and, therefore, as the causes are not eternal, the results can never be eternal.

So the vedic Seers of Truth could no longer believe that the heavenly pleasures as well as the heavens were eternal.

Another point which we should bear in mind, is that these vedic seers were monotheistic in their ideas. At first they tried to explain the mystery of the universe and its creation, by conceiving of a Creator who was omnipotent and omniscient Lord of all. They rejected the theory of creation of 'something out of nothing'¹ and used the word 'Creator' in the sense of one who projects the universe out of the cosmic energy (*Prakriti*) which forms the body of the Lord, and manufactures through the process of evolution the various objects of nature, in accordance with the types of previous cycles. Thus, explanation of the origin of the external world depended upon the conception of God as the projector or starter of evolution. Then they enquired into the nature of the individual soul, the internal or subjective world and its relation to the external or objective world. They gradually arrived at the conclusion that the subjective world is connected with the objective world by the individual soul or ego, which is beyond matter. They also discovered through their experiences in the superconscious state and revelation that the individual soul is eternal. It is beginningless and endless, and its relation to the universal Being or Creator is a spiritual one like absolute oneness on the spiritual plane, or in other words, the Creator manifests Himself in the form of an individual ego. This conclusion they expressed in Sanskrit, the most beautiful of all languages. All such expressions are embodied in the *Upanishads*, the rationalistic portion of the Vedas.

The *Upanishads* contain the expressions of revealed wisdom which explain the nature of the soul and the best method by which that highest knowledge or divine wisdom can be acquired. Gradually those ancient seers gave up the ideal of going to heaven as the highest aim of life, and discovered that happiness which is more permanent and more everlasting than the celestial pleasures. These we shall notice in course of our study on the mystery of death, expounded in the *Katha-Upanishad*.

These *Upanishads* form the foundation of the Vedanta philosophy. In these, you will find the gems of beautiful

¹ In the *Gita* (II, 16) it has been said:

‘नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः’ ।

philosophy of Vedanta. The *Upanishads* are like the grapes and the Vedanta philosophy is like the essence, squeezed out of those grapes. The Vedanta philosophy is based upon these *Upanishads*, but the former is systematized. It shows through logic and reason that perfect harmony exists among the various texts on different subjects described therein. In the *Upanishads*, we find the gems of truth here and there, but it needed a master mind to collect these different jewels of spiritual science and gems of truth and string them together into a beautiful garland like a beautiful necklace. This great task was done by the master mind of Vyasadeva, the writer of the *Vedanta-sutras*, or the aphorisms of the Vedanta philosophy.

There have been many commentators of these *Upanishads*. The earliest and the best of these commentators was Bhagavan Sankaracharya, who was a great saint, a penetrating thinker and perhaps the greatest philosopher that the world has ever seen. He lived about the eighth century after Christ, and he was a prodigy of wisdom. At the age of twelve, he finished his commentary, the *Shariraka-bhasya*, which is the most difficult and the best philosophical commentary that has even been written on the *Vyasa-sutras*.

Sankaracharya was a voluminous writer. At the age of sixteen, he finished all his commentaries on the *Upanishads* and his other works on the Vedanta philosophy. For the remaining sixteen years of his earthly life, he preached the truths of Vedanta and established monasteries in different parts of India for propagating the teachings of Advaita Vedanta among the masses of Hindus of higher castes. He was not merely a preacher, but also a living embodiment of the vital spirit of Vedanta. Thanks to his vast wisdom and unparallel reasoning, he succeeded in delivering a death-blow to the progress of the Buddhist philosophy in India and thereby placed Vedanta on solid foundations. Sankaracharya is regarded as the Incarnation of the god of wisdom, and he is revered and honoured by all classes and masses of Hindus in India.

Sankaracharya made commentaries on the twelve great *Upanishads* of the four Vedas which are regarded as the oldest and the most authentic. Besides these, there are many minor *Upanishads* which also make up the rationalistic portion of the Vedas. Originally, the Vedas contained *mantras* or inspired

hymns, uttered by the *Rishis* or Seers of Truth. At first they were scattered, but afterwards they were collected and divided into four sections by Vyasa, the author of vedantic *Sutras*. The first is the *Rigveda*, the oldest and finest literature of India. It contains the hymns, some of which are most beautiful. The second is called the *Samaveda*. It contains those hymns which were put into music for recital and musical purposes at the time of sacrifices and other ritualistic works. The *Rishis* used to sing those hymns with five to seven notes of an octave. I may mention here that the seven notes of an octave in music were first discovered in India centuries before other nations had them, and that the world owes its first lesson in music to India. The Chinese had only five notes. Before the Greeks and other Europeans had seven notes, the Hindus used them, and the *Samaveda* bears testimony to this fact. The third is the *Yajurveda*. In the *Yajurveda*, we find the description of various sacrifices, and how and when to recite these hymns, or *mantras*, as they are called and for what purpose. And then the last of the Vedas is the *Atharvaveda* which contains various descriptions of the psychic powers. How the psychic powers for healing diseases can be obtained, and how to practise black magic, white magic and sorcery, and how one could protect oneself against sorcery, witchcraft and all evil influences of evil spirits.

The four Vedas include the *Upanishads*, and each Veda has quite a number of the *Upanishads* which describe the true nature of the individual soul (*Atman*), its powers and relation to the universal Spirit. Nowadays, when we speak of the scriptures of the Hindus we mean the *Upanishads*, because the ritualistic portions are not studied so much now, and the sacrifices are not practised in India. Very seldom you will find the sacrifices being practised. Of course, simpler ones are practised by certain orthodox Hindus, but the conditions being changed the greater sacrifices are not practised. In the Old Testament also, you find a description of some sacrifices, but the Jews do not perform them now. Still, when you talk to the Hindus about the sacrifices they will mention the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-Gita* or the *Song Celestial*, as Sir Edwin Arnold calls it. Really the *Bhagavad-Gita* is a commentary on the *Upanishads*, although it was written or spoken by Sri Krishna in about 1400 B.C. The word *Upanishad* does not mean

literally any particular book, but it implies that wisdom which brings the expression of freedom to the soul, and which makes us realize the true ideal of life and attain to perfection.

The word *Upanishad* comes from the Sanskrit root *shad* which means 'to destroy', or 'to guide', or 'to slacken', and the commentator adopts these different senses and explains the meaning of the *Upanishad* by applying the different senses to the work. In this way, if we take the first meaning of the word '*sad*'—'to destroy', we find that the *Upanishad* is that which destroys the ignorance and superstition of the individual soul. If we adopt the second sense, then the meaning of the *Upanishad* would be that which guides the individual soul towards the attainment of the highest wisdom and perfection; and the third meaning will be that which slackens our attachment to our material bodies and to earthly conditions and to the material world. Therefore, that which destroys or slackens our attachment to the world, guides the individual soul towards the attainment of the highest wisdom and perfection, is called *Upanishad*. Thus, various meanings are implied in the word *Upanishad*. Fundamentally it is not a book, for the book does not mean anything, but that collected wisdom which is eternal and uncreated by any human agency. The wisdom (*jnana*) exists in the world whether we recognize it or not. As electricity exists in the world, as the thought-force exists in the world, so wisdom exists in the universe, and that wisdom is like the light of the sun, which destroys the darkness. As the light of the sun destroys darkness, so the light of wisdom destroys the darkness of ignorance and superstition; and that wisdom is the divine wisdom (*parama-jnana*). It emanates from God; it is God; it is the highest ideal of our life. If we have not attained that wisdom, we have not attained anything. We may be millionaires or multi-millionaires, but life would not be worth-living by possessing millions and remaining in the absolute darkness of ignorance. I would rather starve and go without clothes and without any furniture or comforts of life, but I must possess wisdom, and that is the idea. And, in order to attain that wisdom, the earnest aspirants renounce all worldly ties—their friends, their wives and husbands, their wealth and prosperity, as well as earthly cares and anxieties. An honest pursuit of spiritual ideal requires such renunciation without which spirit-

ual endeavour becomes futile. It is a recognised truth, and is upheld in the world over and over again. For instance, if you consider the real nature of the pleasures that you can obtain on this plane, then you will find that it is absolutely ephemeral and transitory. It lasts only for an instant. The highest pleasure that you have enjoyed in your life on earth exists also for a very short period of time. If you try to extend it for ever, you can never possibly do it. So the highest pleasure on this earth is transitory, and the highest pleasure that can be obtained under the present conditions, cannot be more lasting than the flash of lightning, which lasts only for half a second. When you think of your life or the duration of your life and begin to think of eternity, then your earthly life would appear to you just like a flash of lightning. But the soul-life is different. The soul-life is eternal, and if you do not know your soul-life, what is the use of living this transitory and ephemeral earthly life ?

Suppose you have a hoard of wealth and money and you have become a multi-millionaire, but do you think that you would be able to take one single coin with you into the grave ? No, you will not be able to take anything of this world. These things constitute your outward possessions, and do not belong to your spiritual stuff of life. In the highest essence, you are the soul, and the soul is never enriched by these material possessions. The divine wisdom is that which teaches you that even your body is not yours, as you will have to leave that behind. Then what will go with you ? Your character or nature. That is your companion, and nothing else will accompany you to the grave or life beyond the grave. You may meet your friends and relatives on the other side, but you will have to retain your own character, just as your friends will retain theirs. Your pleasure and pain there will be conditioned by your own thoughts and deeds, done on this earth. You cannot change them, no matter where you go. Your mind is with you, your soul is with you, your tendencies are with you, and your desires are with you, and so, if you go into a wilderness and live alone, you will find that your desires will drive you crazy, because you cannot throw away your own mind and desires. As long as you have not done that in this life, so long you cannot expect that after death you will get rid of all these desires. If you wish to

do that, you will have to begin here in this life. So, try to attain to that self-control and rise above all earthly desires, because earthly desires will simply drag you back to this plane. They will not help you in getting out of it. They will keep you tied down to this plane. Therefore, that wisdom, which helps us in reaching emancipation and in slackening our attachment to this material body and material conditions, is more valuable than all wealth and comfort which can be met on this plane. So this wisdom is considered to be the highest. It is the wisdom of the soul and the knowledge of our own being.

Again, suppose you are spending your whole time and knowledge in studying the chemical or mechanical conditions, or the conditions of electricity. This knowledge may produce some material benefit to the world, but that will not help you in realizing your true being. Because true being is beyond the reach of your senses. Now, how that knowledge can be acquired, and that is the question that rises in the mind of all seekers after Truth. Therefore, that question must be solved. That question has been raised and solved by all the *Upanishads*. The *Katha-Upanishad* has also raised this question and solved it with the help of an instructive story. The story tells us how a young man attained to the highest wisdom regarding his own being from a master who is all-knowing, the Ruler of Death on the departed ones. In India, there is a belief that all the departed spirits are governed by a Ruler. The name of that Ruler is in Sanskrit 'Yama'. He was the first man who died, and he became the Ruler of the departed souls or the Ruler of Death. Adam was not the first man, because thousands and thousands of years before the existence of Adam, people inhabited this earth, and they lived and died in the same way as the mortals of today pass out of existence, and, therefore, when the first man came into existence and when he died we cannot tell.

According to modern Geology, the first man appeared in the Tertiary period, which goes back perhaps 10,000, or more than 10,000 years. So, this Ruler of Death had an abode, and that abode is called the realm of the departed spirits (*pretaloka*). There the young man went to learn the truths regarding birth and death, and the true nature of the soul. The *Katha Upanishad* has related the story in a very beautiful way.

The *Upanishad* related that there was a great and wealthy man in India, whose name was Vajasravasa. He was performing a sacrifice, which demanded that he should give up his pleasure and possessions, and should distribute everything he had to the wise and learned ones of those days, to the Brahmins. The sacrifice was not a bloody sacrifice, but was a sacrifice of fruits, pleasures and possessions. There were sacrifices which used to be performed to attain to the highest.

Now, it may be asked as to what is the use of sacrificing that which is in our hands at present for that which we may or may not get in the future. But that question does not arise in the mind of one who has realized the transitoriness of earthly living, and who is really a seeker after Truth. The seeker after Truth is ready to sacrifice all his immediate gains for a larger end, which is more lasting and permanent. He has faith that when he has sacrificed all that is transitory, the Reality will come to him. He is never deceived by that faith, and he reaches the goal, and attains to that which he fights for. So the wealthy man, Vajasravasa was determined to distribute all his possessions among the Brahmins and wise men. He had a son, whose name was Nachiketa.¹ He was about 15 or 16 years of age, but he had a faith and was a seeker after Truth. His father, however, was attached to the pleasures and fruits of worldly life. But although his father promised to renounce and sacrifice everything, yet he did not do it so satisfactorily, because he tried to give away those things which he did not want. For instance, he had cows and he gave away those that were old, dry, blind and diseased and were of no use to anybody.

However he distributed all such cows among the Brahmins and wise men, and kept the good ones for himself. But his son, discovering the nature of these gifts and the psychology of his father and so realizing the promise which his father had made, said to himself that anyone who distributes all such poor things and breaks his promise in this way, will go to the regions

१। उसन् ह वै वाजस्रवसः सर्ववेहसन्दौ । तस्य ह नचिकेता नाम पुत्र आस ।

where they should not attain the highest happiness and bliss.² And, so, he went straight to his father and asked him: "My dear father, to whom wilt thou give me?" He repeated the same two or three times. The father did not answer, and when his son was asking him again and again, the father got extremely angry and said in an unconscious mood as it were: "Thee I shall give to Yama (Death)."³ The young boy, believing that his father actually meant what he had said, began to prepare himself to go to Yama. He thought within himself what he could do for Yama, as he did not know how Yama, the Lord of Death would treat him.⁴ His mind was disturbed a little, but he comforted himself by thinking that he should be the first among those who were living to go to the abode of Death. He should be in the midst of those who were then dead, and at the same time he did not know what would be his duty towards Yama, the Ruler of Death. This young man had that real insight into the true nature of things, and he understood the condition of our earthly life. He said: "What is there in death? There is nothing. Like grains they are born and die out, so I shall be one among them,"⁵ but what I ought to do in the abode of Death I do not know." Then he went to the abode of Death, and there he entered into that realm, but the Ruler of Death was away from home. He went for visiting some other place, and here you will notice as the story tells that even the gods are sometimes not at home. And so this young man had to wait three days and three nights, and there was no one to receive him.⁶ He did not get any food to eat,

२। तं ह कुमारं सन्तं दक्षिणासु नीयमानासु श्रद्धाविवेश सोऽमन्यत ।

पीतोदका जग्धतृणा हुग्धदोहा निरिन्द्रियाः ।

अनन्दा नाम से लोकास्तान् न गच्छति ता ददत् ॥

—कठ उपनिषद्, १।२-३

३। स होवाच पितरं तत कस्मै मां दास्यसीति ।

द्वितीयं तृतीयं तं होवाच मृत्यवे ददामीति ॥—कठ उपनिषद्, १।४

४। किं त्विदं यमस्य कर्तव्यं यन्मयाद्य करिष्यति ।—कठ उपनिषद्, १।५

५। शस्यमिव मर्त्यैः पच्यते शस्त्रमिवाज्यंते पुनः ॥—कठ उपनिषद्, १।६

६। स च यमसम्भवनं गत्वा तिस्रो रात्रीरुवास यमे प्रोषिते ।—शाङ्करभाष्य, १।७

or anything to drink until the return of the Ruler of Death. He was a Brahmin, and he was a very righteous and spiritual man. He had a great many virtues, and he had great spiritual power. After returning home, the Ruler of Death saw this young Brahmin, and he was frightened. He said, a Brahmin's stay at home for three days and three nights without receiving any hospitality was not a good omen for any householder. It would bring evil to the householder. You know, in India, the guests are received with the greatest hospitality, and they are treated like living gods on this earth, and if a guest goes away without receiving any hospitality that guest leaves all bad luck with the householder, and takes away all the good luck and virtues of the householder. So, this Ruler of Death, thinking of all these things, was extremely frightened. He did not know what to do. He said, if a wise man or a Brahmin comes and stays in the house as a guest without receiving any hospitality or food or drink, all the hopes and expectations of that house are lost, and all the virtues are destroyed, and all good works cease to produce their results. Saying these things, he spoke to the young man this way: "Oh Brahmin, thou hast stayed in my house for three days and three nights without receiving any hospitality; thou deservest honour and reverence. My salutations to thee, Oh Brahmin. As thou hast lived here for three days and three nights without receiving any hospitality, thou shouldst ask for three boons and I shall grant thee three boons, whatever thou wishest to obtain. I am extremely pleased with thee, and, in return, I beg of thee to grant me all good luck and good fortune." This young man answered: "The first boon I shall ask is this: grant me that my father, who was so angry with me, will attain peace in his mind and sleep

७ । वैश्वानरः प्रविशत्यतिथिब्रह्मिणो गृहान् ।

तस्यैतां शान्तिं कुर्वन्ति हर वैवस्वतो हकम् ॥

आशाप्रतीक्षे सज्जतं सुनृतां चेष्टा पुतै पुत्रपशंश्च सर्वां ।

एतद्बृहक्ते पुरुषस्याल्पकेघसो यस्यान्जनं वमति ब्राह्मणो गृहे ॥

तिस्रो रात्रीर्यदवात्सी गृहे मेऽनजनं ब्रह्मन्नतिथिर्वमस्य ।

नमस्तेऽस्तु ब्रह्मन्, स्वस्ति सेऽस्तु, तस्मान् प्रति त्रीन् वरान् वृणीष्य ॥

well, and will not worry about me, and grant him all blessings and happiness.”⁸

Think of a son who was treated in that manner by his father, and whose first thought was to return good for evil. He was not like the ordinary sons of the present day, who shoot at their parents for the sake of wealth and possessions. So this young man asked that as the first boon—that his father would be pleased with him, would be happy and sleep well and would not ask about him, and after his return from the abode of Death, he would recognize him and treat him as his son.

The Ruler of Death granted that boon with the greatest pleasure. He said: “Thy father will be happy and will recognize thee and treat thee with the greatest kindness and love”.⁹

Then the second boon was this: In heaven, there is neither fear nor death; there is no old age nor decay; there is no hunger nor thirst; there is neither pain nor suffering; there is continuous pleasure, continuous happiness. Nachiketa said: “Oh Ruler of Death, thou knowest that sacrifice by which the mortals can attain to that heaven, and this is my second boon. I would like to know by what method one can go to heaven and what is the nature of that sacrifice”.¹⁰

The Ruler of Death granted that boon and told him about the sacrifice by which mortals can attain immortality and dwell in heaven for ever. That sacrifice, as described there, is called the ‘fire sacrifice’. He gave his name to that sacrifice, and from

८। शान्तसङ्कल्पः सुमना यथा स्याद्वतमन्युगौतमो माभि मृत्यो ।

त्वत् प्रसृष्टं माभिवदेत् प्रतीतः एतत् त्रयाणां प्रथमं वरं वृणो ॥

—कठ उपनिषद्, १।१०

९। यथा पुरस्तावद्भाविता श्रतीतः उद्दालकिराहर्णिर्मत्प्रसृष्टः ।

सुखं रात्रीः शयिता वीतमन्युस्त्वा ददृशिवान् मृत्युमुखात् प्रमुक्तम् ॥

—कठ उपनिषद्, १।११

१०। स्वर्गे लोके न भयं किञ्चनास्ति, न तत्र त्वं न जरया विभेति ।

उमे तीर्त्वा अशनाया-पिपासे, शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके ॥

—कठ उपनिषद्, १।१२

that time it is called the *nachiketagni* after the name of this young man.¹¹

Then his third boon was this: "There is a belief that after a man is dead, he is gone for ever; others believe he is still alive. Which of these is true? What exists after death? Tell me this; explain it to me. This is my third boon—the secret of death".¹²

The Ruler of Death did not want to explain it to him right away. He wanted to test the mental condition and the spiritual nature of the disciple. So he said: "Oh Nachiketa, even the gods are doubtful regarding this question. They do not know the right answer to this question. It is very difficult to understand. Ask for some other boon and I shall grant it to thee with pleasure".¹³ Nachiketa replied: "When gods do not know the answer to this question, and when there is none wiser than thyself, Oh Ruler of Death, I shall not ask for any other boon". "Where shall I get any teacher better than thee? So there is no other boon equal to this. I must know that secret".¹⁴

The Ruler of Death said: "Ask for longevity. If thou wishest to live for hundreds of years, I shall grant it to thee with pleasure. Ask for children and grandchildren and great grandchildren, all the animals, like horses and elephants; and

११। तवैव नाम्ना भवितायमग्निः।—कठ उपनिषद्, १।१६

१२। येयं प्रेते विचिकित्सा मनुष्ये

अस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीति चैके।

एतद् विद्यामनुशिष्टस्त्वयाहं

वराणामेष वरस्तृतीयः ॥—कठ उपनिषद् १।२०

१३। देवैरत्रापि विचिकित्सितं पुरा

न हि सुविज्ञेयमणुरेष धर्मः।

अन्यं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व

मा मोपरोत्सीरति मा सृजैनम् ॥—कठ उपनिषद् १।२१

१४। देवैरत्रापि विचिकित्सितं किल,

त्वन्न मृत्यो यन्न सुज्ञेयमात्य।

वक्ता चास्य त्वाहगन्यो न लभ्यो—

नान्यो वरस्तुल्य एतस्य कश्चित् ॥—कठ उपनिषद् १।२२

wealth, gold and all jewels and gems ; and if thou wishest to be a ruler of earth or ruler of any other planet, I shall grant these easily , but I cannot grant this boon". "If thou wishest to live for ever, I can concede that, but I cannot tell thee the secret of death". "If thou wishest to have thy desires fulfilled, I can grant that. I shall fulfil all thy desires except this. I cannot let you know this secret. It is the most secret thing in the world". "What is the most difficult thing to attain by mortals, ask for those, I shall grant thee with pleasure". All these damsels in the celestial regions, if thou wishest, thou canst have them, and such damsels are not to be obtained by ordinary mortals". "Do not ask me that question again ; I shall not be able to divulge thee".¹⁵

But this young man was not lured by those fascinating temptations. He said: "What shall I do with these things ? They are all transitory ; they do not last long. They are all ephemeral. Everything that can be perceived by senses, lasts only for a short time, and even life is subject to decay and death. Even eternal life is not worth-living without knowing the secret of death. All the dancing damsels and fruits of life keep those for thyself. I have no need for them. Man can never be happy by wealth and possessions. No one has ever attained to happiness by wealth and possessions. I have seen that. So, why dost thou offer me all these things ? I shall not be happy by possessing those things. For even eternal life I do not care". 'Eternal' is used in the sense of an indefinite period, because the Ruler of Death has control over all lives except the soul or the *Atman*. But all the material conditions

१५। शतायुः पुत्रपान्नान् वृणीष्व, वदून् पशून् हस्तिहिरण्यमश्वान् ।
भूमेर्महदायतनं वृणीष्व, स्वयञ्च जीव शरदो यावदिच्छसि ॥
एतत्तुल्यं यदि मन्यसे वरं, वृणीष्व वित्तं चिरजीविकाञ्च ।
महामुसौ नचिकेतस्त्वमेधि, कामानं त्वा कामभाजं करोमि ॥
ये ये कामा दुर्लभा मर्त्यलोके, सर्वान् कामाश्छन्दतः प्रार्थयस्व ।
इमा रामाः सारथाः सतुर्या, न हीदृशा लम्भनाया मनुष्यैः ॥
आभिर्मत्प्रप्ताभिः परिचारयस्व नचिकेतो मरणं मादनुप्राक्षीः ॥

of life and even the celestial conditions of existence (*svarga*) are subject to change. "Who will care for a long life after knowing the conditions of the world? I do not care to live a long life. I do not care to live for thousands of years. What shall I do with such a long life, if I cannot have the highest wisdom, the highest knowledge?" "Where there is such a great doubt and even the gods that the bright angels do not know the answer to this doubt, do thou tell me that, and that is my boon".¹⁶

This young man would not accept any other boon than the boon of the secret of death. So, when Nachiketa, who was a real seeker after Truth, was seeking for the highest wisdom, he went to his master, the Ruler of Death. This is a story, of course, and this story has a real value and an ideal. Those who have attained to the highest knowledge and those who have attained to immortality by reaching the state of superconsciousness, can alone explain the secret of death. Others cannot. Mortals do not know what will happen after death. But if you wish to know the secret of death, you will have to enter into that state of superconsciousness. You will have to commune with the infinite Being, and that knowledge will come to you. That knowledge was possessed by this great teacher, the Ruler of Death. And this young man was not to be tempted by any of the pleasures and beauties of this world. He was absolutely free from attachment to all worldly conditions, and, therefore, he was ready for the highest wisdom. And what the Ruler of Death said afterwards, we shall follow in the next chapter.

१६। इवोभावा मर्त्यस्य यदन्तकैतत्, सर्वेन्द्रियाणां जरयन्ति तेजः ।

अपि सर्वं जीवतिमल्पमेव, तवैव बाह्यास्तव नृत्य-गीते ॥

न वित्तेन तर्पणीयो मनुष्यो, लब्ध्वामहे वित्तमद्राक्ष्म चेत्त्वा ।

जीविष्यामो यावदीशिष्यसि त्वं, वरस्तु मे वरणीयः स एव ॥

अजीर्यताममृतानामुपेत्य, जीर्यन्मर्त्यः क्वचन्यत्थ प्रजान् ।

अभिध्यायन् वर्णरतिप्रमोदान्, अतिदीर्घं जीविते कां रमेत ॥

यस्मिन्निदं विचिक्रितसन्ति मृत्यो, यत् साम्पराये महति ब्रुहि नस्तत् ।

योऽहं वरो गूढमनुप्रविष्टो, नान्यं तस्माच्चिकेता वृणीते ॥

CHAPTER II

THE RULER OF DEATH

In the last chapter, we found how the young man went to the abode of Death and asked for three boons. The first two boons were granted, the third boon was asked by Nachiketa, and it was about the mystery of death.

Nachiketa said: "Oh Ruler of Death, there is this doubt that when a man dies, some people say that he still lives and that he continues to exist, but others declare that he is dead and gone for ever, he does not exist. Which of these is true?" And such was the nature of the third boon which the young man asked of the Ruler of Death.

We have already noticed how the Ruler of Death wanted to test the sincerity and earnestness of this seeker after Truth. In India, it is customary for a spiritual teacher to test the sincerity and earnestness of the student, before the former transmits knowledge to the latter. The spiritual pursuit is a serious undertaking. Mere curiosity is not enough in that path. What one requires, is deep loyalty to the ideal. The curiosity-mongers will never reach the highest goal, until their hearts and souls have become sincere and earnest. The earnest seekers after Truth are very rare and, therefore, the spiritual teachers keep their disciples for a long time, test them and find whether they are true seekers after Truth or not, before they give their higher instructions. The Ruler of Death, assuming the position of a spiritual teacher of India, asked Nachiketa whether he would not like to have some other boon instead of that desired one, because it is very difficult to answer. To acquire that knowledge, regarding our nature after death, is even desired by the *devas*, the bright spirits and angels and the departed spirits. The departed spirits do not know their own conditions. Some people think that everybody who passes out, becomes absolutely conscious of his future after his death or his real state after death. But this is not true. Very few know and very few understand the laws. Some of the spiritualists declare that all those who depart, become immortals right after death, but that

is untrue. They do not remain in that state for ever. They may be born again and again, and some of the spirits admit the reincarnation or rebirth of the soul. Others do not know anything about it. Those who are born and brought up in the theories and doctrines of Christianity i.e., in the one-birth theory, think that it is the first and last birth, and even after death they retain the idea; and if you ask them questions they will answer that they will never be born again. But those who have learnt a little more or perhaps advanced a little more, will say differently. And, therefore, amongst the departed spirits you will find just as much variety of opinion as amongst living mortals; and that will give you an idea how difficult it is to know the real truth.

Now, what is the real truth? Only that is known to Yama, the Ruler of Death, and, therefore, this young man, who was a real, sincere and earnest seeker after Truth, wanted to know that from the Ruler of Death, and not from any other being, not even from the *devas* or bright spirits, because they have different opinions, and sometimes they are doubtful. He was not persuaded by any of the temptations which the Ruler of Death offered him as his third boon. The Ruler of Death asked him to go to heaven, and enjoy the celestial pleasures, or to remain on earth and enjoy all worldly bliss to have many children and grandchildren, possess all the beautiful horses and chariots and other conveyances, and be an emperor of the country, or an emperor of the world, or take a long life which may last for hundreds of years. The Ruler of Death was willing to grant any of these precious boons or any other boon equal to them. But he hesitated to answer that particular question which was about the mystery of death.

But the young man, Nachiketa answered that all the pleasures of life are transitory. So long there is the Ruler of Death in this world, there cannot be real pleasure and real enjoyment, because all pleasures are limited and fleeting by their nature. Even a long life would not be desired so long as death is sure to come, sooner or later. There must be death at some future time. It may be after an indefinite period, but how can that be a source of pleasure and happiness? So he did not care for earthly pleasures, nor craved for celestial bliss even.

Now, celestial pleasures vary according to our ideas. I

have described already that different nations have different heavens and different kinds of pleasures which are also associated with those realms. A Mohammedan heaven is a place where there is plenty of water, shade and fruits, and beautiful damsels, music and dancing, etc. A Norwegian heaven is one where all the heroes of war go and fight battles against their enemies and wild animals. The American Indians' heaven is a place where there are plenty of animals, where they can hunt all the time. The Christian heaven is also different.¹ So with the other peoples' heavens. But all these heavens are nothing but the places or realms where our highest desires are likely to be fulfilled.

We have certain desires which we consider to be the highest, and then we wish for a place or a realm, where these desires could be readily fulfilled; and, therefore, we imagine such heavens, or project our ideas and dreams of such realms, and that is the heaven which we can think of. All the heavenly ideas, regarding the celestial planes, are nothing but projections of our own ideas and desires. They are realities, because whatever we think is real, or can be made real. The thoughts are things. If you build a castle in your thought, that castle will be real to you, so long as you are on that plane of thought, just as a dream is real so long as you are dreaming. But when you wake up, it is unreal. It shows that the reality is relative, i.e., the reality which lasts for the time being under certain conditions, just as the reality of the sense plane is relative too. If you go into a dreamless sound sleep at night, the whole world will vanish in relation to you. You would not exist, and you would not be conscious of anything. So the reality is relative so long as we are on the sense plane. But go out of the sense plane and you will find it unreal. All the fascinating objects and lovable things, such as relatives and friends, will vanish. If you are in a swoon, or if you are in a state of sound sleep, where you do not have dreams or know of anything else, they will all vanish. Where are they, and where are you? You are not on the sense plane, and that will be the difference.

So you must understand first the relativity of our different relations or planes of existence, and then you will be able to

¹ Cf. Abhedananda *Path of Realization*, pp. 177-181.

understand how thoughts are the realities. Even the dreams are realities. The celestial regions are also realities under certain conditions. For instance, if you dream, you are in the heaven and never wake up, you will be in the heaven. Suppose you are dreaming that you are in the heaven and enjoying all the blessed pleasures of that plane, and continue to do so without getting into any other condition, and you will remain there all the time. Then, if you suddenly wake up, the whole thing will vanish ; then other ideas will come in, and other dreams may produce other results.

This phenomenal world is like a dream. Ordinarily we do not realize it, but we can realize it when we shut our eyes and also shut the door of our senses, and then the whole thing vanishes like a flash of lightning. Where it goes, no one can tell. Then we wake up suddenly. But what is this, where has it gone, where does it come from, we ordinarily do not know.

We do not see also the real basis of the external world. We are conscious only of our relation to the external world, and that is the reason why it is so different from individual to individual. As each face is different from the other, so each mind is. Each one's perception is also different. You neither see the same thing as I see, nor can I see the same thing as you see. We may see similar things, but not the same things. That is very wonderful. We do not pay any attention to that subject, because we are too busy with our little selves and petty affairs. We have certain ideas, but these ideas are pitifully small and insignificant. Still we consider them very great through our wrong valuation, and we devote the whole energy and attention to gratify them. For instance, you may have an apartment, or a house, and you may think that your whole life draws its nourishment from it. That is a wrong judgment. You are crazy to do certain things, to fix it, adjust it, etc. But we do not consider how long our pursuits will yield satisfaction, nor do we consider the justice of the cause which devours our so much time and energy. We forget that we stand almost on the brink of death. We often forget that vital point. But if we remember that life is fast fleeting, then we seek the highest, and realize that which is permanent and brings us eternal life and knowledge of our own selves or beings. Such undertaking is worth-pursuing and in keeping with man's spiritual urges.

Otherwise our endeavour will entail mere waste of time. Of course, in the light of temporal, it is no waste, but it is so only in the light of the spirit, only in the sense that we while away our time without seeking the highest and the best, without preparing ourselves to peacefully pass the jaws of death.

Again, we strive for the achievement of the highest heaven in terms of celestial enjoyment. But heaven, as we have already seen, is created after man's imagination and so it has no root in the world of reality. Even assuming the objective existence of heaven as such, we are not sure to enjoy there eternal joy. It is a common experience that a prolonged pleasure brings monotony, and is tyrannically painful in the long run. The pleasure, to be the pleasure, must necessarily be fleeting. Again no sense-pleasures we wish to continue for ever. If there be one set of pleasures all the time, we should hardly enjoy them. Because everything depends upon comparison. If we see the red colour all the time, we would see the whole universe red. That is a very peculiar thing. Get the eyes impressed with one particular colour and you would not see anything else. Look at the sun for a few moments intensely, fixing your eyes wide open, and then turn them and you would not see any other colour. That would teach you that pleasure depends upon comparison, and when that comparison is the standard of knowledge of the thing, how can you know that this happiness is worth-having in some other plane? How can you know the celestial regions are not like dreams, unless you wake up and go further up?

These comparisons will teach you many sound lessons, and if you accept them, you will be able to understand whether wealth is worth having or not. Then you will be able to understand the mental condition of this young seeker after Truth, who despised all earthly and celestial pleasures and preferred to obtain that knowledge which was about the mystery of death.

Now, if we ask an ordinary man of this country or of any other country, whether he would prefer the knowledge of the mystery of death to earthly pleasures and dollars and cents, his answer would be in the strong negative. He would rather have dollars and cents and earthly pleasures, but this young man did not say that. He refused to accept any of the transitory objects which the Ruler of Death offered. He simply insisted that he would know the mystery of death and nothing else.

Anyone who has sense and whose eyes are open to the reality of things, cannot crave for earthly pleasures, not even longevity on this beautiful earth. But the question, concerning the life after death, is the most vital question. Everyone ought to bear in mind that central point. Everyone ought to have that question solved, and, therefore, Nachiketa asked: "Oh Ruler of Death, speak to us, explain to us that point which even the *devas* and the bright spirits and angels have doubted". "There is no other boon", said the young man, "higher than this". The Ruler of Death was very much pleased. He found that the young man was sincere to the core. He could not dissuade him from his determined resolve to unveil the mystery of death. He must have that knowledge, or he would not have anything else.

Now, that kind of determination is necessary for successful spiritual advance. Anyone who has that determination to achieve the end, no matter what happens, will succeed in the end. That firmness of character is very rare. People who go after truth simply for curiosity, lack that basic firmness. They waver and hesitate. They have a little power just for a little time and then their faith is gone, and when it is gone, nothing is left. But we must have never-failing faith in the end, and we must struggle on until the goal is reached. That kind of determination is necessary, and this young man's case was an instance in point. Therefore, it is very valuable for us to hold this ideal of determination of this young man. Let us be firm like him, so that when all temptations come and drag us to the sense plane or to the pleasures of life, we must not waver or give in. We must hold before our eyes the ideal of this young seeker after Truth, who despised everything and cared for nothing short of highest wisdom. Nachiketa ultimately succeeded in realizing his objective by means of his firm determination and resolute will.

The Ruler of Death said: "There are two things in this world. The one is good and the other is pleasant etc."² "And

२ । अन्यच्छ्रेयोऽन्यद्दुतैव प्रेयस्ते उभे नानार्थे पुरुषं सिनीतः ।

तयोः श्रेय आददानस्य साधु भवति, हीयनेऽर्थाय उ प्रेयो वृणीते ॥

these two bind the souls of mortals, and chain the souls of mortals in various ways. While the wise accepts that which is good, the ignorant resorts to that which is pleasant".³

In this world, there are two courses of action: the one leads to absolute goodness—the highest Truth, the other is apparently very pleasant, though short-lived. If we pursue what is pleasant, we miss the highest Truth, but if we go after that which is good, we miss what is pleasant. In other words, the two paths are mutually exclusive and contradictory to each other. The acceptance of the one implies invariably the rejection of the other. Now, which of these two paths ought to be accepted and followed ?

The wise, after long discrimination, have discovered that the path, yielding the pleasures of life, is not desirable, because what is pleasant, must be attended by unpleasant elements. On this material plane, we do not find any pleasure which is not attended with its opposite—suffering or pain in some form or other. And, therefore, a wise man, after proper discrimination, follows the path which is away from both pleasure and pain, and follows what leads to absolute goodness that brings in its train the perpetual happiness. That happiness is independent of the sense relations. What we mean is that without the eyes, or the ears, or the senses, we still enjoy happiness, and we do not lose it even after having eyes and ears and senses. That is, the object of the highest good is never disturbed by any sense of pain or suffering, either on account of the body, or on account of ambition and desire, or any other object of the senses. That happiness is absolutely independent. It does not depend upon anything and never leaves us. It is greater than celestial pleasures. Because while celestial pleasures are dependent upon the senses and sense organs, true happiness, proceeding as it does from absolute goodness, is independent of all senses or sense conditions. Therefore, a wise man prefers the permanent pleasant path. For instance, you can derive pleasure by being wealthy. You can buy lots of things. But

३। श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यमेतः, तौ सम्परीत्य विविनक्ति धीरः ।

श्रेयो हि धीरोऽभि प्रेयसो ब्रूणीते, प्रेयो मन्दो योगक्षेमाद्ब्रूणीते ॥

—कठ उपनिषद् २।२

you may be attacked by a serious illness which wealth cannot cure, and that disease will spoil all the pleasures of wealth. Many millionaires and multimillionaires have chronic dyspepsia, cannot eat anything, cannot enjoy a good appetite, they are over-eaten and over-fed, and, consequently, suffer from various kinds of ailments. Have you seen any millionaire or multimillionaire who is absolutely peaceful, who is free from anxiety and worry, and who is free from disease and fear of death? No. It is very rare. But you will perhaps find that mental state in one who is the poorest of the poor, but sleeps soundly with a clear conscience without having the feeling that he has cheated or robbed anybody, or deprived others of their rights. Really he, who is never worried by the fear of thieves and robbers and is never disturbed by anything, enjoys absolute happiness. He is free from hunger, thirst, anger and pain. He is not dead, he is pretty much alive, but he is free from all these. Would not you like to be one like him, who is free from all troubles and anxieties, free from constant rush, constant running after wealth, name, fame and social etiquette and condition? Would not you like to be free of all these? Who can care for all this rush and clamour of the world, unless we forget ourselves entirely, forget our ideals and become like fools?

People follow the good and pleasant courses, according to their native desires and tendencies, but he who is a sage or a wise man, follows the path which leads to absolute goodness. On the contrary, the other path of pleasure is followed by those who are guided by ambition and greed and are dwelling in the darkness of ignorance. Such words may sound pessimistic to the ears, but they are not at all so.

Pessimism is that which makes us feel evil in good. But this we call right discrimination. We do not see evil in good, but we want to distinguish real good from real evil, that is evil in this sense—not in its worst sense. That is evil, because it does not lead to that knowledge of our true self and real nature, and it does not bring permanent happiness unto us. Some people may say that permanent happiness is impossible. Of course, permanent happiness is impossible, if you consider it to be derivative from the relative conditions, or the sense relations. Only then it is impossible, because the sense conditions can never give you anything absolutely permanent, and, there-

fore, some of the German philosophers have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to get permanent happiness. So they leave it aside as an impossibility, as a mystery, as something which is unknown and unknowable, as something incomprehensible. But, in Vedanta, you will find that the question is solved in an altogether different manner. The Vedantists do not expect to get permanent pleasure within the realm of the senses. Though they accept the transient and the conditions of relativity, yet they do not stop there. They are eager to proceed further, for they visualise a state which is beyond our sense powers and sense perceptions. That urge is inherent in our soul life. It is beyond the realm of sense perceptions and is permanent. So the deluded men follow the pleasant path, whereas the wise ones follow the path to eternal goodness.

“But thou, Oh Nachiketa, hast renounced all that is pleasant. All that appeals to our senses, I have offered thee, but thou hast given them up. Thou hast not cared for them, and hast not chosen that path which is followed by the majority of people, and that path is undoubtedly the path of delusion and death”.⁴

In the Western countries, especially in Europe and America, the vast majority of people follow the first path of sense pleasure. They have no other higher ideal before their vision, and they accept pleasure as their ideal, for pleasure has an easy fascination of its own. They accept anything that appeals to them, because this ideal of pleasure is considered to be the first, the most permanent and the most prominent thing. But in the East, the ideal is different. There the ideal of the path to goodness receives the first and the most prominent recognition, while pleasures are only secondary. Therefore, the whole system of civilization in the East is based upon that exalted principle. The social conditions and the political orders are there considered to be secondary. In India, you will

४। स त्वं प्रियान् प्रियरूपांश्च कामान्

अभिध्यायन् नचिकेतोऽत्यस्ताक्षीः ।

नैतां सृङ्गां वित्तमयीमवाप्तो

यस्यां सज्जन्ति बहवो मनुष्याः ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।३

find a selfless Sannyasin, who has renounced everything, is considered to be higher than an emperor. The emperor will sit at his feet, even though the latter is as poor as a street-beggar, without having any possession, or anything to eat. If a true Sannyasin is walking along the street, a prince will stop his carriage and salute and kiss the dust of his feet and then go on. The prince considers himself very fortunate and blessed, because he has found a wise man on his drive. But in the West, a very few people, amongst the wealthy classes, pay any attention to a selfless Sannyasin who is wise, but bereft of all material longings and belongings. Such is the difference.

The Western people mostly live on the surface. A man who is wise and elevated in spirit, and has no outward show, is nobody in that society. Very often he has no respect, no honour, no position and nothing. He will, perhaps, be starved to death, or be sent to an asylum. But in the East it is often different; there the people do not see the surface. They do not calculate how much one possesses, but their burning question is how much one knows and how much one realizes. That is the difference. This difference should not be, however, pushed too far. It is relative and not absolute. There is no virtue or vice, which is exclusive to the East or the West. Yet it is true that each has certain dominating characteristics. While in the East, the ideal of goodness receives greater recognition; in the West, the idea of pleasure enjoys larger loyalty. It is merely a question of distribution of emphasis.

These two paths are wide apart, nay, are opposed to each other. The one is the path of knowledge, and the other is that of ignorance. That which leads to absolute happiness and is good for our soul, is the path of knowledge, and that which leads to pleasure alone and keeps us in darkness about the nature of our own self and the mystery of death, is the path of ignorance. We never pay any attention to those things, but simply eat and drink and have a good time; and when we die, we do not know what will happen unto us. But a few amongst such people wake up and get frightened and disgusted. They have enough of all these things. They want something better and higher, because there is that craving inherent in each soul. No matter how we delude ourselves, there is an innate craving in our souls which sometimes wakes up and disturbs the peace

of our mind, and rouses that question. what shall become of us after death; what is the reality? In ordinary moments, we do not think of our deeper self, because our mind is busy with thousand and one material pre-occupations. But in the moments of silence, or in the hours of misfortune, when our mind is inwardly drawn, we begin to think of our spiritual life and ask such vital questions, as lie submerged in our busy outward life. The blow of fortune often brings out in reaction a wonderful awakening of the soul. Misfortune is in many instances a great teacher of mankind. All troubles and worries that come to us, are often helpful in the long run. They awaken our inner self, and open our eyes to the realities of things. They also enrich our mind and broaden our vision. If we never had any misfortune or suffering, we could have never learned the true nature of this earthly life and could have never reached the highest good.

Today you depend upon one thing that slips out of your hands. You shall never depend upon it again. This is the condition of this world. Then you begin to think. Next time you begin more carefully, and you do not go wildly with that great emotional enthusiasm which marked your previous step. On the contrary, you now ponder before you proceed. And, then, if you make any fresh mistake in another direction, you become still more cautious, and thus gradually and gradually grow wiser and maturer and gain the knowledge that this world is a transitory playground, and it is not worth having. When you develop that mood of the mind, you become ready to get out of it—not by committing suicide, but by reaching that which is beyond it. Then you turn into a seeker after the highest absolute Truth. If you have not learned what this world is like, then plunge into it and see what stuff it is made of. Enjoy the pleasures of life, and see the end of it. Do not think that this is the end of your life. It is only the beginning of a process. Enjoy the pleasures, but be prepared for the reaction. Be prepared to take the other side also. If you accept a mountain of pleasure, you will have to carry a mountain of pain too over your shoulders. Be prepared for that, then plunge into the world, and come out victorious in the end, if you can. Hold the belief, if you can, that this world is not permanent, and gain direct experience of it. In other words,

the world is like a school and we have come to gain experience herein. What difference does it make, whether we are in the lowest grade or in the highest grade? The difference is only a difference of degree, not of kind. In the lowest grade, you have found some pleasures and some pains, perhaps of the grossest kind; and in the highest grade, you are finding some other pleasures and pains, perhaps of a finer kind. That is the difference, but they are all the same. When compared to that which is permanent, they appear to be as ignorable as others.

So, these two paths are wide apart, and are absolutely opposite to each other. But the spiritual teacher, the Ruler of Death, was extremely pleased with the disciple, who did not choose the path that leads to death. Nachiketa was really a seeker of knowledge and truth, and he chose the path to permanent good, bliss and immortality.⁵ In fact, the path to immortality is the path of knowledge. It is not knowledge about the relative objects, but is true knowledge that reveals to us the mystery in which we live. True knowledge is the knowledge of the reality of the universe, and all other knowledge is only a preliminary step towards that spiritual knowledge. Nachiketa was loath to choose the path of pleasure which is followed by the vast majority of mankind. In this respect, Nachiketa's stand was unique. He was a genuine seeker after Truth, and so he could not be debarred from that path by any means. He was courageous enough to break through all obstacles that beset his path. Nothing could make him shrink even for a moment and not even an inch.

The fools dwelling in the darkness of ignorance, often fall as the pitiful victims to self-deception, and think that they know everything. They move about staggering to and fro like blind men, by making disciples and teaching others, thus reminding us of the famous story of the blind men, led by blind men. As the blind men are led by blind men, so those who follow these fools fall into the ditch of darkness, grop

⁵ The Ruler of Death praised Nachiketa by saying:

विद्याभीष्टिनं नचिकेतसं मन्ये

न त्वां काम्यं बहुषोऽलोलुपन्त ।—कठ उपनिषद् २।४

in it, and suffer in the end.⁶ Now, these fools happen to be the leaders of the worldly life. The moment we follow them, we are following like will-o'-the-wisp, and then chase the phantoms of hope, expecting every minute something new, but not noticing what is under our feet, and we fall ultimately into the ditch. That is the condition of those people who run after the pleasure of life. They are chasing the phantoms of hope, following the footsteps of the will-o'-the-wisp, and they are on the path of pleasure. Go to the saloons at night, and see what these people are caring for. Do they know anything? If you tell them about the path which leads to goodness, they will perhaps scorn you with neglect, and regard you a fool. They think that they have acquired the highest pleasure in life, and those who do not follow their path, are losing or missing the mark in their judgment. But go to a specifically wise man, who does not care for anything in the world, but follows the path to absolute happiness. He is contented and happy. He feels deeply in his soul that he does not really belong to this world. He is not of this plane. He is thus different from the rest of us.

"Hereafter he does not appeal to the children dwelling in the darkness of ignorance. They are deluded by wealth and possessions. Such children of wealth declare that there is nothing hereafter, there is nothing after death, and everything vanishes with the body." "And such fools", said the Ruler of Death, "come again and again under my sway".⁷ They cannot, in truth, get out of the trap of death. They remain bound within the realm of death.

६। अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः

स्वयं धीराः पण्डितम्मन्यमानाः।

दन्द्रम्यमाणाः परियन्ति मूढा

अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः ॥—कठ उपनिषद्, २।५

७। न सम्परायः प्रतिभाति वालं

प्रमाद्यन्तं वित्तमोहेन मूढम्।

अयं लोको नास्ति परं इति मानी

पुनः पुनर्वशमापद्यते मे ॥—कठ उपनिषद्, २।६

Death has a certain realm. It has its limits, and they (children) cannot get beyond the boundary of that dark realm. They travel back and forth, round and round. Sometimes they remain earthbound and sometimes they remain clothed with a finer substance. The difference between the departed spirits and us is: we are clothed with the garment of flesh blood, but they are clothed with a finer substance. The departed souls can go through a wall. But we cannot go through a wall, and so we need a door. That is the difference. But they are just as much within the realm of death, as we are. Death means change of our physical conditions, and not annihilation of our self. Some people think that death means destruction. Death does not mean destruction or absolute annihilation, but the transformation of our life into its elemental conditions. It means coming and going. This realm is the realm of birth and rebirth. You may not believe that realm, but your belief will not make much difference, because you do not know why you have come to this world. If you knew why you had come to this world and could solve that question, you would have some right to believe or disbelieve where you were before your birth. You do not also know where you will be after death, and it only means that you are groping in the darkness of ignorance. If you could know where you were before your birth, and if you could tell where you would be after your death, then, you have come to the realization of life. Search for the inner light, and stop not until that goal is reached. When you have got that light, you transcend the limit of death. When you have transcended the realm of death, you have transcended the realm of pleasure and pain. A new field or realm will be opened before your vision, and you will see things with new eyes and will understand the import of things in a new light. Those whom you worship in ignorance, you will know and worship in knowledge. That which you cannot answer now, will be answered for you after obtaining that light. That light is the light of wisdom. Do not for a moment doubt that it does not exist, but hold firmly that it does exist, and feel it proved on the pulse. Have faith in it, because that faith involves faith in knowledge as well as faith in your own self. It is not blind faith, because you are obviously something and represent some deeper thing. Remember this truth that something can never

come out of nothing. You have come out of something and something has produced yourself and something is within you. It is a mistake to think that your parents have produced in you that vital something. In truth, your parents do not create you. You may say God created you, but try to find out more scientifically whether he created you out of nothing or simply sent you from another place or from another condition of existence. Then you will be able to solve that question of birth and death, or the cycle of birth and rebirth.

Now the Ruler of Death will describe most beautifully the condition and real nature of the soul. So far he has described the condition of those who are following the path of pleasure and are tied to the realm of death. The Ruler of Death said to Nachiketa that ignorant persons do not understand the true nature of the hereafter, but, on the contrary, the wise alone grasp the mystery of self, and transcend the realm of death.

CHAPTER III

DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

The Ruler of Death said to the young seeker after Truth that the hereafter (*paraloka*) is not revealed to those who are deluded by wealth and ambitions and are living in the darkness of ignorance. Such ignorant persons do not realize the real condition after death. They think that there is nothing left after death, and everything is gone and destroyed. 'They again and again come under my sway'. They die many times, and it also implies that they must be born many times, as death presupposes birth. The Ruler of Death does not suggest that failure to realize the immortal life will involve the eternal perdition, or the eternal suffering; on the contrary, he categorically said: 'They will come again and again under my sway'. They will be born again and again, and will die again and again. As opposed to the one-birth theory of Christianity, the Hindu philosophers uphold the theory of numberless births and deaths of the living beings. The process is repeated so long the living beings do not realize their spiritual Self. The utterance of the Ruler of Death is significant to the Hindu belief in the rebirth, or reincarnation of the soul.

In those ancient times, when the higher truth came like a revelation to the seers of Truth, the great thinkers and the spiritual leaders did not believe in the existence of the eternal punishment. They did not believe that those who would not realize the highest truth, would go to the eternal perdition, but they believed in the rebirth or reincarnation of the souls, and that idea is conveyed here in the *Katha-Upanishad*.

The eternal perdition is only emphasized in the Semetic religions like the Judaism, the Christianity and the Moham-medanism. Of course, we find this idea in the Zoroastrianism too. But in the religions of ancient and modern India, we do not find such belief; on the contrary, we do find the idea of reincarnation very strongly upheld. The sinners in Hindu view will be born again on this earth. Here in this life we receive the results of the heaven and the hell. We can make the life

heavenly or hellish according to our thoughts and deeds. The heaven and the hell represent essentially certain mental conditions which are in their turn determined by our thoughts and actions.

Of course, the idea of heaven existed in ancient India, but that heaven was not considered as eternal in the same sense as the Christian heaven is eternal. The Christian conception of heaven implies eternal existence, and the same condition will be continued without having any cessation or end. But, in India, the idea is very different. Here the people believe in many heavens, and all these heavens are determined by our thoughts and deeds. They are eternal only in a relative sense, as they last only for an indefinite period of time. For instance, those who go to heaven to enjoy celestial pleasures, will stay there so long as their good works and good thoughts would permit them. There is a limit to the good thoughts and deeds, and there is also a limit to the results, derived from those good thoughts and deeds. Eternal heaven, according to the religions of India, is practically impossible. Because when we think the meaning of the word 'eternal', we find that what is beginningless and endless in time, is eternal. But Vedanta says that the temporal things are not permanent at all, i.e. the things that are the members of time and space, are impermanent and perishable all the time.

Now, can you think of a realm of existence where there was no beginning, or any state, or any condition of pleasure or happiness, and where there would be neither beginning, nor end, in the literal sense of the term ? In fact, we cannot conceive of such a state or realm, but we can think of a realm where there is the beginning of pleasure, and that pleasure will continue for an indefinite period of time. And that we can imagine easily. That is the secondary meaning of the word 'eternal' which connotes the idea of a comparatively longer period. Our earthly pleasures are limited by time, and so they do not continue for a long period. The celestial pleasures are similar to the pleasures of the phenomenal earth, as they may last for an indefinite period of time, but will perish at last.

Now there are different degrees of pleasure in different realms or heavens. Those different realms afford us such pleasures as we desire most and as our desires vary, and the

desires in the realm, where we should enter after our death, will also vary. Certain desires will carry us to a particular realm, and other desires of a different nature will take us into other realms, and those desires which cannot be fulfilled anywhere except on this earth, will again bring us back to this plane of existence. This approach is very rational, and it has a strong appeal to all thinking minds.

But the question which this young seeker after Truth asked, was on the immortal part of our being. The word 'immortal' means what is not subject to change of any kind. Anything what is subject to change, is within time and space. Anything that is subject to change, belongs to the realm of nescience or *maya*. But, if we desire to have anything, or to know anything that is unchanging, we must seek it in a realm beyond the categories of time, space and causation.

Our physical bodies are subject to death, decay and change. Because they are born in time, they are extended in space, and they are subject to the laws of causation. The whole phenomenal universe is of similar nature. It exists under the same conditions, as they exist within time, space and causation. Therefore we see that this phenomenal universe is changeful. The phenomenal universe is constantly changing in its process, and there seems to be lacking any permanent thing in it. But if we can find anything that is not subject to time and space and which transcends all the laws of causation, then that thing is truly immortal and beyond the reach of death and decay.

Now it can be asked as to where that deathless immortal thing or being is. How can we find it? Where does it exist? What is it like? These questions naturally arise in the mind of him who is the seeker after truth and immortality. Those who are born and brought up in the faith of Christianity, think of immortal life just like the continuation of the phenomenal life, only with a little difference, and that difference is only in degree. They think that they will retain their bodies and have all the desires and thirst for pleasures and continue to enjoy the life. But that is simply impossible. Because, in the first place, we cannot carry with us this physical body after death; and we shall have to leave it after death. Some people console themselves by thinking that the physical body will resurrect after death, and all bones and dusts will be put together,

and they will assume another physical form, or perhaps the same body as we have at present, and that body will last forever. These ideas, however satisfactory, may appear to those who are children in the game of life, are hopelessly inadequate for the thinking and rational ones. As soon as you face the facts of life boldly and deeply, those ideas appear to you as fantastic. Then you realize that the material body cannot be revived, and cannot last forever, and, consequently, you will have to give up those hopes. Then it can be asked as to what kind of body will remain after death. The answer naturally comes that the spiritual body remains after death. But what is the spiritual body? The spiritual body is nothing but the finer matter, put together by the finer forces, and, therefore, it is understood that spiritual body is also subject to change. It may last for a longer period, but we cannot call it immortal in its truest sense.

So the immortal body is not like an apparition, or a ghost-like something which materializes. The material body is not the immortal thing in the true sense of the term, because that is also temporary. So there is something behind it, which is beyond time and space, and beyond the reach of our senses, and that is really immortal. Now, if we do not understand that central point, we cannot solve, or cannot even discover the mystery of death. Because the realm of death exists beyond the reach of our senses which are phenomenal. Death also attacks our mental or thought forms. Now it can be asked, what do we mean by death? Death does not mean destruction, but it simply means the change. Our mental or thought form is equally subject to change like our physical body. You can create a thought body by your imagination as you create the material body by your will. The thought body would appear to you like a dream body, and that body may talk to you, and may be perceptible to your senses too, but you cannot prevent it from being changeful. It is beyond your power to set limits to its changing career. As the dream body is subject to change, and as the imaginary bodies are subject to decay, so the spirit-body is subject to change. That is, what we call the subtle body (*sukshma-sharira*) is also subject to change and decay. So beyond all changes and decays is that immortal part within us. It is not the same thing as spirit (*pretatma*) in its ordinary sense, it is not the same thing as our physical form, but it is different

It is a fact that the teacher must be wonderful, and the student must be wonderful. A teacher of immortality, or of immortal part of our being must be something different from the ordinary teachers. Ordinary teachers cannot reveal this truth, because they do not know it themselves. Similarly ordinary students not being purified in their heart, soul and intellect, cannot grasp it even when it is explained. That is the first difficulty. We must go through different grades of mental, mortal, intellectual and spiritual evolutions, before we can realize that most subtle substance which is our true being and immortal nature. Ordinary speakers may talk of the immortal life, but if you ask them the question: 'Have you realized the immortal life, or the immortal part of your own being, they will be confused. Ordinary lecturers and speakers do not know anything about it. The book learning, or only the book knowledge, cannot reveal it. It is a different kind of knowledge. You cannot acquire the knowledge of immortality by only reading the books. You will have to feel it, and that feeling must be the result of the long practice of concentration (*dharana*), meditation (*dhyana*), and superconsciousness (*samadhi*). The practice of Yoga is necessary in order to feel the immortal part; and once you have felt it in your soul, you become free from the fear of death. When you have once realized your own being as free from the physical body, and free from the mind and all the sense perceptions and also above this phenomenal world and the laws of nature, then and then only you have realized your immortal being. And that feeling can be acquired only through the teaching of such a realized master, and not from ordinary run of the teachers who teach by merely reading the books.

The realized master (*Guru*) has the power to open the spiritual eye of one who is deeply striving, and whose heart and soul are purified. If the student's heart, soul and intellect are not purified, the master's efforts will not produce the required result. The student will have to go through different grades of evolution, and that evolution will come by itself, if we are animated by the spiritual longing, strong desires, and firm determination. They are the necessary accompaniments of the spiritual and mental evolutions, and those qualities will change whole of our nature, transforming us into a quite different

being. And it should be remembered that a seeker after Truth is also different from an ordinary mortal. An ordinary mortal runs after the sense pleasures, and craves so much for the external things, for money, name and fame, and objects of ambition. But a student after Truth does not care for all these things. His mind is far above these material pursuits, and is ready to understand the truth of the immortal life.

A man who is taught by the ordinary teacher, cannot understand the absolute Truth, and cannot realize it. His mind becomes confounded. But when he is taught by one who has himself realized the immortal life, his mind becomes free from all doubts and confusions. By mere arguments we cannot explain what exists after death. In fact, no argument will be convincing in this respect. There cannot be any scientific proof in the sense that it cannot be verified, observed, or demonstrated by sense perceptions. For obvious reason, the immortal element in us is beyond the reach of the senses. The senses work in and through that immortal part, but they in their turn, can never reveal it. That which can be revealed by the sense powers, is only a phenomenon. Just as a spirit, when it is materialized, can be perceived by your senses, but that form which you perceive with your senses, is not eternal and immortal. It is only a temporary manifestation, just as any other phantasm or object of sense perception would be temporary and ephemeral. The spiritualists² do not also understand this. They think that this is their resurrected body, and they are living in that form for all time to come. But, in reality, they are not so. They delude themselves by various false notions. Urged by their native desires and general tendencies, they first form certain ideas and opinions in them. Next they project those ideas, and when they perceive certain things which are in harmony with those preconceived ideas, they feel extremely happy and believe that they have known the truth. But, in reality, the truth remain far from them.

Now that which is immortal, is very subtle. The ordinary teachers will not be able to disclose that truth. The scientific arguments and logical discussions will not reveal it. The modern scientists have not also been able to come to any definite

² Here the spiritualists are those who culture the science and practice of communications with the departed souls and the spirit world

conclusion about it. Some say that there is no such a thing as life after death, and so deny it entirely. And this has been going on for centuries. From the very beginning of the history of humanity, this discussion about the life after death has been going on, and no absolute conclusion is reached by those who have not realized it through the higher perception of Yoga.^३ But those who are only on the intellectual plane, and those whose spiritual eyes are not open, cannot come to any definite conclusion about it, and nothing can also convince them. But the seekers after Truth happen to meet such great souls who have realized their immortal nature, and if such seekers after Truth be prepared to receive the instructions, and to have their eyes opened, the result becomes wonderful. When the speaker (*vakta*) is wonderful and the seeker after Truth (*jnata*) is also wonderful, the result becomes wonderful.

The immortal part is the *Atman*. But the *Atman* is very subtle. It is subtler than the subtlest of things you can imagine. It is smaller than the smallest—‘*anoraniyan*’. If you cannot think of an atom, you cannot also think of that part which is immortal and is the foundation of our being. It is subtler and finer than an atom. The very existence of the atom depends upon this substance which is immortal. How are we able to discover it by our sense powers, when we cannot discover an atom by those gross organs? How can we discover the immortal part, the *Atman*, which is the source of our life and the basis of our conscious intelligence and also the foundation of our being?

That extreme longing which makes the seeker after Truth well-qualified to receive instruction and to realize the immortal life, is very rare to obtain. It cannot be acquired through vain arguments and discussions. That longing must rise spontaneously from the bottom of our souls. How it comes and when it comes nobody can tell. It is the expression of the natural evolution of the soul. Some people may have that longing from childhood, and others may have it in youth, and others may

३ । नैषा तर्केण मतिरापनेया प्रोक्तान्ये नैव सुज्ञानाय प्रेष्ट ।

यां त्वमापः सत्यवृत्तिर्बतासि त्वाद्दृष्टो भूयाश्चनिकेतः प्रष्टा ॥

—कठ उपनिषद्, १।२।९

have it in maturity or old age. Unless all our earthly desires are satisfied, we cannot have that longing.

In India, of course, we often find that many young boys and young girls have that longing. Girls of 15 or 16 years of age have that longing so strong that they cannot think of anything else, and they do not even care for anything else. They live a high spiritual life, and devote their whole life to that sublime cause. The boys also often do the same. But, in this country, in the city of New York, how many do you find who have that longing in early age, or in youth, or in maturity? They care more for the money, the social prosperity, and the success in business. Of course, those desires must be fulfilled first before that longing will come, and when that longing is once acquired, it cannot die out, but must continue to grow stronger and stronger until the Truth is realized.

"That longing, Oh Nachiketa", said Yama, the Ruler of Death, "thou hast acquired. Thy longing to know the Truth is great. Thou art firm and determined in thy desire to know the Truth. Thou hast asked me the question, but I have persuaded thee to give up that question and take some other boon, the pleasures of the heaven, the pleasures of the earth or the long life and all the comforts of the earthly life, but thou hast renounced them all. Thou hast not cared for any of those objects which I offered thee".⁴ "I wish there were seekers like thee" said the Ruler of Death. Farther he said: "I know how the thoughts and desires of worldly people lead to temporary and transitory results".

Really all the results of our earthly desires are not permanent. They will come, but they will not remain for ever. If we desire all the things of the phenomenal world, we cannot hold them. They will come and go, and so the Ruler of Death said that they are all transitory. "I have known them, but few people realize that, and, therefore, they come within the realm of death again and again, because their eyes are not opened". But we the mortals do not see that these things are imperma-

४। कामस्याप्तिं जगतः प्रतिष्ठां ऋतोरानन्त्यमभयस्य पारम् ।

स्तोमं महदुल्गार्यं प्रतिष्ठां दृष्ट्वा धृत्वा धीरोनचिकेतोऽत्यन्ताज्ञीः ॥

—कठ उपनिषद्, १।२।१५

ment. We do not also realize that these things do not serve the highest end of life. Those who have deeply felt these ideas, find no relish in the worldly objects and pleasures. They know it for certain that all the works we perform, whether good or bad, produce the results which are equally impermanent. Even the virtuous acts cannot produce any result that will live for ever. Those results will also be conditioned by time and space. They may lead to higher realms, to the realms of our ancestors, or to the realms of the *Devas* or bright spirits, or the angels, or even to the realm of a personal God. Even a personal God rises from the ocean of the infinite Reality at the beginning of a cycle, and when the cycle of evolution changes and involution begins, the personal God also goes down into the ocean of the impersonal being, the Absolute.⁵ That Absolute exists through eternity, and that which is truly permanent, immortal and absolutely unchangeable, cannot be obtained by anything that is impermanent, non-eternal, or transitory. Then how can we expect to realize the eternal substance by the non-eternal acts of our bodies and thoughts of our minds? Therefore we must rise above all thoughts and all works, which are non-eternal and impermanent.

The Ruler of Death said: "I have come to this realm from that of the departed spirits, and I have become a Ruler of the departed spirits by virtuous deeds and thoughts, but I know that this realm of the departed spirits is not also eternal". Of course, a Ruler of Death comes and fills his position, like the President of the United States for a certain period, or for a cycle, and then another comes, and steps into his shoes. So you see how the ancient seers of Truth went into the realm of the spiritual life after death, and understood the minute details of that realm. Next they explained what they realized, what they knew, and what had come to them as revelations to their students, and taught them those truths which they had received from their teachers.

The Ruler of Death said to this young seeker after Truth: "Oh Nachiketa, thou hast come to this realm of the departed spirits and hast seen the ultimate results of earthly desires and how they are fulfilled. Thou hast seen the source of all human

⁵ The absolute Brahman.

beings and how they come into existence. Thou hast realized the realm that can be obtained through the worship and the devotional exercises. Thou hast also known the conditions of the heavens which are described with words of praise by various nations. Thou hast seen them ; thou hast understood the wide path and abode which are open to all the seekers after pleasures, but through thy determination and intense longing for the higher knowledge, thou hast cast them aside and thou dost not care for those things. Thy mind, heart and soul are longing for something which is more permanent and eternal than the heavens of all religions, but that something which thou desirest to know, cannot be known and perceived by the senses".

He said again: "Oh Nachiketa, it (the *Atman*) is imperceptible by the senses ; it is hidden within our souls ; it dwells in the cave of our hearts ; and it is very subtle, very deep, old, and ancient. It existed before the beginning of creation, and still it exists, and it will exist through all the eternity. If thou wishest to know this, thou must practise Yoga, practise concentration, meditation, and must enter into the state of superconsciousness (*samadhi*), and there thou must come face to face with that which is eternal and immortal.⁶ Then thou shalt be able to realize that *Atman* and after realizing that eternal truth, thou shalt rise above the phenomenal pleasure and pain, sorrow and misery, happiness and unhappiness. Whoever has realized that immortal nature, has become perfect, has gone beyond good and evil, virtue and vice, heaven and hell, and beyond all duality and relativity, and has transcended all the laws which govern the phenomenal nature".

These few foregoing words will perhaps enable the mortals to form an idea of what that immortal life or being is like, and when the mortals will be able to separate that immortal part from what is subject to change, decay, and death, they will realize the glory of that immortal part. The mortals then rising above the limit of mortality, will enter into the abode of the

६ । तं दुर्दर्शं गूढमनुप्रविष्टं गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्टं पुराणम् ।

अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं मत्वा धीरो हर्षशोकौ जहाति ॥

कठ उपनिषद्, १।२।१२

immortality, where death has no access and where there is lasting joy and bliss. That realm is the realm of the Absolute, or the realm of the Infinite. Nothing short of that infinite absolute Being can be called truly immortal. But, strangely speaking, the absolute Being is not far away from us. It is dwelling within us. We do not have to go outside of ourselves in search of that absolute Being. We must feel it in our inward depths. We must go through the layers of our thoughts, desires, ideas, and mental conditions, and then must enter into the innermost chamber of our own self. There we shall find the domain of the Absolute which gives the foundation to our consciousness, existence, and bliss. It is only then we shall realize through the practice of Yoga our true nature which is immortal. Only then we shall remain immortal and free after death, and shall be able to achieve whatever desire will rise into our minds. Then we shall be able to come to this world, if we want to go to the heaven or any other realm, and we shall there enjoy absolute freedom. But first of all we must learn our immortal nature. We must realize the absolute truth even in this earth, and must not wait until death has destroyed our physical shell. We must make up our mind, and have firm determination that before we enter into the realm of death, we must realize our immortal nature, and shall be conscious of it in this life. Then everything that happens, will be guided by that power of our immortal life, and will make us happy forever.

CHAPTER IV

THE ABODE OF DEATH

As you have already noticed the young seeker after Truth, who went to the abode of Death, asked for three boons. The last boon was about the mystery of death, i.e., about what exists after death. The wonderful teacher, the Ruler of Death, sought to dissuade in various ways the young seeker after Truth from his insistence on that specific boon. He offered him other tempting boons, asking him to take anything except that particular one. But the sincere student, Nachiketa, was least inclined to deviate from his point, and at this, the Ruler of Death was extremely pleased with him, and admired his earnestness and sincerity of the soul. At this stage, the seeker after Truth took advantage of the opportunity, and asked another question which we will have to discuss now.

Nachiketa said: "Oh, Lord, if thou art so pleased with me, kindly answer this question which rises in my mind now. I wish to know what is beyond virtue and vice, and beyond all the works of our body and mind and their results. What is there that is above time, which is neither past, nor present, nor future? If Thou knowest that, kindly explain the same to me".¹

Nachiketa wanted to know that which is beyond the categories of virtue and vice. Ordinarily we have some sort of conception about virtue and vice, but very few people care to search after that central something which is beyond the limits of virtue and vice. It is, however, to be noted with emphasis that the seekers after Truth of all ages and climes have struggled to find out that something which is beyond all relativity and all dual existence like heat and cold, good and evil, pleasure and pain, virtue and vice. That something embodies the highest essence in us. If we have known that something, we

१। अन्यत्र धर्मादन्यत्राधर्मादन्यत्रास्मात् कृताकृतात् ।

अन्यत्र भूताश्च भव्याश्च यत्तत् पश्यसि तद्वद ॥—कठ उपनिषद्. १।२।१४

have also known the absolute Reality, and, for that purpose, the seeker after Truth put that question. The absolute Reality is also beyond our thoughts and deeds, and beyond the results of our actions. The results of our acts, with the acts themselves, are within the realm of what we call the phenomenal world. The Absolute is beyond all phenomena. It is not confined to the limits of the phenomenal existence.

We live at present within the realm of phenomenal relativity. Anything we perceive or sense, or anything we are conscious of, is the expression of the relative existence, that is, existence which is related to some other existence. In other words, it is conditional existence. For instance, our earthly life would have been impossible, if there were no earth. Suppose the earth is destroyed by its sudden clash with a comet, and our earthly life on this plane would vanish; or if the law of gravitation cease to operate, our bodies would melt away and become like vapour. These are the instances of conditional existence. If there be no light or heat of the sun, we cannot exist. Thus if you examine any event of your life, you will find it to be related to something else. That it is not absolutely independent, but it is dependent upon other things outside of itself, and that is the state of relative existence. As for instance, your sense of pleasure is related to your sense of pain. If you have not suffered, you cannot enjoy the bliss of pleasure. So suffering is the precondition of our pleasant feeling. We enjoy everything by mere comparison. In this way, all our knowledge depends upon comparison. If there be no darkness, there would be no light, and if there be no light, there would be no darkness. If there be no heat, there would be no cold; if there be no cold, there would be no heat. This is what we call the dual existence (*vyavaharika* or *apekshika dvaita-satta*), that is, one depending upon the other. Within the realm of this duality, we cannot find anything that is absolutely unchangeable and permanent. This relative existence is subject to change. How far does this relative existence extend? It extends as far as there is space, and as far as there is time, and that which is absolute or unchangeable, is not within the realm of time and space, but it transcends them both.

Now, what is time and what is space? Time is nothing

but that interval which exists between two ideas. One idea arises in our mind, and another idea follows it, and that succession, the interval between the two ideas is called 'time'. Space means 'co-existence'. That is, if you think of yourself as standing or sitting here and think at the same time of some other point which is outside of yourself, and if you hold these two thoughts that which separates them, is called 'space.' Consequently, time and space both depend upon the existence of our mental condition.

When you analyze in that way, you find that everything in the phenomenal world is within time and space, but if you can go beyond time and space, you rise above your mental states. So long as there is time, there is space, there is the mental activity on the phenomenal plane, and if you rise above time and space, you come to the absolute Reality that is unconditional, and that has neither beginning, nor end. All the phenomenal bodies like the earth, the sun, the moon, our human body, and anything that we perceive with our senses, have a beginning, and, consequently, must have an end. That is what we mean by the realm of time.

And, therefore, this young man, Nachiketa asked that question: "What is there that is beyond time, which has neither past, nor present, nor future? Is there anything which is not conditioned by time, and which exists always in the same way?"² In reply to this question, the Ruler of Death said: "Yes, there is." There is the absolute Reality which is the background of this phenomenal universe. It is the support or substratum of all relative existences, and it is described in the scriptures as the highest goal of life. It is not an abstract idea, but is a positive something, whose spirit has found an echo in the Vedas. All the scriptures seek that absolute existence. You may call it by any name you like. It is unchangeable, beyond time, beginningless, endless and all-pervading. That something is the ideal of all the scriptures. They may call it God, or give it any particular name or form, but they always and everywhere mean that unchangeable substance or Reality of the universe which is omnipotent and omniscient. If we understand the true meaning of these attributes, we shall

² Cf *The Katha-Upanishad*, 1.2.14.

find that they all refer to that one infinite being, or substance, or reality of the universe, and, therefore, the Ruler of Death said that all Vedas and scriptures of the world seek that end.

The scriptures have not found it, but they represent man's striving after it. They tell the spiritual aspirants the methods, by which the highest goal can be attained. Simply by reading the scriptures you cannot realize it. You must be deeply loyal to its spirit in thought and action. In other words, you will have to sincerely follow the teachings in your life, and then you will be able to realize. Simply reading the books and repeating the phrases will not do any good, but you will have to understand the real spirit, and search after that realization with your whole heart and soul. Then and then you will attain to it, and not until then. All penances and austerities are meant for that ideal. People try penances, endure austerities, and go through all hardships. They perform ceremonies and rituals. It is not for nothing that people undertake all these hardships, but they undertake them for the realization of that central something. It is the urge of that spirit which drives men and women to live the life of righteousness, purity, chastity, and truthfulness. Why do they so live? Obviously not aimlessly, but by a spiritual urge. They have before their vision a central ideal, or the ideal of the eternal truth, and it is for the realization of that ideal that they joyfully undertake all hardships and sacrifices, and try to live the life of chastity, forbearance, and disinterested love. Their sole concern in life is to realize that fundamental something which is the basis of our phenomenal life. It admits of varying names and forms according to the soil of its birth. Different nations and different religions have given different names to it. The eternal Word is one of its most significant names, and this particular name has been used here freely. The true meaning of that eternal Word is described in the Bible, in the Fourth Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That Word is the foundation of all scriptures, of all thoughts and ideas that can be expressed by the human minds through words. All words have emanated from it, and it is the eternal Word which is described in the Vedas as 'AUM' (OM). If you understand the meaning of this wonderful Word, you will know that all the articulate sounds are included in

these three letters AUM. Those who have read Swami Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*, are, I am sure, acquainted with the wonderful meaning of this sacred Word. Every word or sound is included in this Word, and this Word is the eternal name of the absolute Reality. If we repeat that name and contemplate on its meaning, then gradually we shall be able to understand the absolute unchangeable Truth. The absolute Being that can be understood through this Word, is described as the foundation or basis of all the phenomenal appearances. This 'AUM' is the eternal Being, and the eternal Being or the absolute Reality is the ideal of this sacred Word, and anything that is permanent, anything that is divine, is included in the meaning of this word, 'AUM'.³

If the true significance of this Word OM be felt in the soul, all desires are fulfilled, because all our desires spring from that infinite source or reality. So the fulfilment of all desires depends upon the knowledge of the absolute Reality of the universe.⁴ No other knowledge will satisfy our desires, whether mental or spiritual. You may seek for the satisfaction of your desires by pursuit of the objects of the sense pleasures, but the satisfaction that you would derive, would be very transient and fleeting. The cravings for the flesh will rise again and again, and they will bind your soul, and make you unhappy. On the contrary, if you have that knowledge of the eternal Truth which is the highest ideal of life, you will notice unmistakably that your desires are fulfilled in proportion to your advance towards the ultimate goal. Your desires will be satisfied one after another, and nothing will remain unfulfilled. If you then desire anything, or any kind of happiness, you will get it through that

३। सर्वे वेदा यत् पदमामनन्ति, तर्पांसि सर्वाणि च यद् वदन्ति ।

यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत्ते पदं संग्रहेण ब्रवीम्योमित्येतत् ॥

—कठ उपनिषद् १।२।१५

In Vedanta, this eternal sacred Word OM has been regarded as the determinate (*saguna*) Brahman, being the symbol (*vachaka*) of the indeterminate (*nirguna*) Brahman.

४। एतद्वेद्यवाक्षरं ब्रह्म एतद्वेद्यवाक्षरं परम् ।

एतद्वेद्यवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा बो यदिच्छति नान्यं तत् ॥—कठ उपनिषद् १।२।१६

eternal Being or Truth. The worship of truth alone will reveal to us the highest ideals, and that is the highest kind of happiness and blissfulness. We do not understand what true happiness is, and we do not know what blissfulness is. We know a little of the true pleasure. But the phenomenal pleasure is not the same as the permanent peace and contentment. Pleasure is not the same again as happiness. But where there are absolute peace, calmness, and serenity of mind, there is the expression of true happiness and blessedness.

The pleasure of the senses cannot reveal true happiness. When that true happiness becomes a lasting reality, it is called the blissfulness. It is very difficult to acquire. So long as our minds are occupied with and troubled by the cares and anxieties of the material world, we cannot enjoy that blessed happiness. It is the highest stage of man's aspirations ; and when we acquire it, we become divine, and become free from all desires. In other words, all our desires at that stage receive their final fulfilment, and the resulting satisfaction is not fleeting and transient, but everlasting in character.

This eternal truth, as expressed by the eternal Word 'AUM', is the best and highest support of the universe. All other supports which we come to know by means of our intellectual or sense powers, are only secondary and not the highest. The highest support of the universe is the absolute Reality alone. Knowing or realizing this absolute ground of the universe, one is magnified in the body of the eternal Truth, and becomes glorified⁵. Then we realize our own glory. A spark of that eternal Substance or Reality, falling within the realm of time, space and laws of the phenomenal nature, appears as the individual soul, or the ego, the actor, the thinker, and the doer. The true nature of this ego, the actor, thinker or doer, is one with the absolute Reality, and when we have understood our own nature which is divine and also ego behind our souls, we have realized the absolute Truth, the support or the substratum of the universe. How can we understand the support

५। एतदालम्बनं श्वेष्टमेतदालम्बनं परम् ।

एतदालम्बनं ज्ञात्वा ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥—कठ उपनिषद् . १।२।१७

of the universe without knowing the support of our own selves ? So, first, we must know the support of our own self or ego. We must know who we are, and what we are in reality, why we have come to this world, where we are going and what we are going to accomplish by our thoughts and deeds. These questions we should put to ourselves repeatedly, and try to solve them to our satisfaction. The great souls always ask such vital questions about the self and the absolute Reality. But the ordinary run of men care little for these issues. They just shut their ears and eyes, and plunge themselves into the mire of this temporary, ephemeral and phenomenal world. They pursue the phantoms of hope, and crave for things which are grossly material, only to be disappointed in the long run. They have not got the thing they really crave for, but they delude themselves by thinking that they have found the substance even when they are chasing the mere shadow of it. That is exactly what we are all doing. We are chasing the shadow of truth and not its vital substance. We blindly pursue the phantoms of happiness, but are absolutely unaware where true happiness lies.

It is a fact, that we all are craving for happiness. But where is it to be found, and who can tell us ? Go to your friends, and you will find that they have not found it, and, consequently, they cannot tell you. But go to the wise man who has found it and who have realized it. Find such a soul who has found the absolute happiness, or who has realized the eternal Truth, and that soul will help you. Ordinary men cannot help you, because all of them are groping in the darkness of ignorance. They are chasing the phantoms of hope, just as you are doing. So how can they help you in your pursuit ? The real help comes from them who have realized the Truth, and who are living in the eternal Bliss and are enjoying it every moment in their lives. After death such blissful souls go to that infinite abode of wisdom and love. They suffer from no sense of emptiness. They are not mere stalks or stones, but they retain their individualities and consciousness, and thus enjoy a lasting blissful state.

Properly understood i.e. realized, the nature of our soul will be revealed to us in its true essence. At present, we are labouring under false conception about it. Ordinarily we think that we are the sons and the daughters of Mr. and Mrs.

So and so We celebrate our birthday, we have so many friends, we have so many duties, we are made up of flesh and blood, and we are fat or thin, stout or feeble, tall or short. This is our conception of the apparent self, but it is not indicative of our true self, the *Atman*. We have the conception of the body through which the soul is manifesting its powers. But the body itself is subject to death, and that which lends it life and makes it moving, is our true Self. It is not in the body, though it animates the body. It is within the body, as is outside of it and separate from it. The body may have its birth, and the body may have its death, but the soul does not undergo those processes. The body may have its duties, sorrows, and sufferings, but the soul is above all these turmoils and changes. The body may decay, but the soul is undecaying. The body may appear to be fat or thin, but the soul is neither fat nor thin. The body may be tall or short, but the soul is formless. In short, the forms and changes of the body do not affect our true soul, the *Atman*. That is the most wonderful thing. But we delude ourselves through ignorance, and cherish dearly some false conceptions about the nature of the inner self.

Moreover we identify ourselves with the physical or the material transitory form, but wise men think differently. In their search after truth, they realize their own being, and know that their own self is something unborn and imperishable. It is immortal by nature. It is the eternal source of intelligence and wisdom. It has not sprung into existence out of some other object, but it is inborn and self-subsisting substance. It is steady and permanent. But the body is constantly changing. The material body undergoes constant change and decay. Science tells us that every seventh year all the molecules or atoms of our body are changed and renewed. But that which is our being and true Self, remains unchangeable amidst this stream of changes. That is the only unchanging reality in the midst of all changing procession of the forms. Thus we see that we have thrown away our old bodies many times already in life. Where is our baby body? It is already dead and gone. The young body is also dead and gone. In this way, series of bodies are dissolving and emerging. The old bodies are replaced by the new ones; and thus we are passing through the ever-recurring process. Our bodies are just like the eddies that are

constantly moving and turning in the infinite ocean of the ether. We are just like the whirlpools, as the external matter is coming in and internal matter is going out. It is a constant inrush and outrush of the material particles from our environments and surroundings. That is what we call our body. We decorate our bodies, take special care of them, and think so much of them, but we never know that this body is nothing but a whirlpool or an eddy in the infinite ocean of ether, or ethereal substance. When we have known this, we cannot have any blind attachment to this body. If we do not know this, we shall remain attached to it. In ignorance, we may think a great deal of these little forms which we are now carrying. But, in knowledge, we feel that the soul is much higher than these material forms. The soul is beyond birth, and it is eternal and immortal.

This is a point which may be very novel to those amongst us who are brought up with the Christian idea that we have come for the first time, that we have been created out of nothing for the first time, and that we did not exist before, but after death we will continue to exist forever. If we are brought up with that idea, we will find it difficult to understand that we existed before, and that we are eternal and immortal. But if we ask within ourselves such questions: where did we come from, why did we come, how could God create us out of nothing, and if we pursue these vital questions very sincerely and try to understand them properly, our spiritual eye or the eye of wisdom, will be gradually open to truth, and we will realize that we existed before our physical birth. It is a very difficult goal to achieve, and only the realized souls have attained to it. The realized souls have risen above the ordinary conception of our being, and have realized the eternal and immortal nature of our true self. We read in the Christian scriptures: "Christ said: 'I existed before Abraham was born' ". If Christ could say that, that ought to be the standard of all children of God. In fact, all the individual souls are the children of God. They existed before Abraham was born. We all also existed long before Abraham, Moses and Adam existed. The immortal nature is our birthright. What makes you feel that you have come into existence for the first time all of a sudden like a soap-bubble, and begin to experience things? What makes you feel

that your phenomenal emergence was sudden and miraculous ? That is impossible in this universe which is governed by natural laws. The universe is eternal, and, therefore, its laws are also eternal. In fact, everything is eternal in this universe ; everything is indestructible in this universe. The higher laws and truths, which form the background of all phenomena, are eternal. Our true selves are also eternal, as they are not subject to birth and death ; and when the body is destroyed, we shall continue to exist. Do not think that your self is also destroyed. Nothing can destroy your self or being, because your self or being is beyond the reach of those powers which produce change, birth, growth, and decay. You know from science that the atoms are indestructible. If you destroy a chair, you have destroyed only the form of the chair, but the particles of matter which made up that chair, remain throughout eternity. They are not destroyed. And you know that if you burn a chair into ashes, the quantity left behind, will weigh exactly the same as the chair weighed, when it was in its gross form. So, nothing is lost, nothing is destroyed, and nothing is taken out. Everything remains the same, only the form is changing. The particles of the body will remain in the universe after death, and those particles will help in forming other appearances. They are not destroyed in the real sense of the term. If the atoms and the finer particles of the matter are indestructible, do you think that what produces the consciousness of the matter, the real knowledge of external objects or forces, will be destroyed at the time of death ? No, that is also indestructible and immortal. And, therefore, the Ruler of Death says that when the body is dead and gone, the soul continues to exist. The soul lives, and is conscious of other experiences, other states, and other conditions, which we are unaware of at present. Ours is not the only sphere of existence. This is only the material sphere of existence. There are spiritual realms, where we can remain without taking this material body, or the phenomenal form. Imperceptible they may be with our gross senses or sense organs, but they are perceptible with spiritual senses.

The *Bhagavad Gita* says: "If the killer thinks that he has killed, or the killed thinks that he is killed, both of them do not know that the true soul, the true self, can neither be killed nor is able to kill. You cannot destroy the soul, no matter how you

try".⁶ The fire cannot burn it; water cannot moisten it; air cannot dry it; weapons cannot pierce it.⁷ You can pierce the body, but you cannot pierce the soul. You can burn the body, but you cannot burn the soul, or the *Atman*. The soul continues to exist. If you have the power to feel the existence of such a soul, you can feel it. The modern spiritualism is only trying to give some demonstration of these souls, which exist after death. Of course, their demonstrations may often be mixed up with the fraudulent phenomena. But still there is some truth in the theory that the souls exist after death. Whether they communicate or not is a different question. Some do communicate, and others do not. Some have power to communicate, while others have not. But that would not be the proof. The communications may be imperfect, or may be interpreted imperfectly on account of the imperfections of the mediums. Sometimes the communication may come without any medium, and that is the best communication when we do not need any medium. That is direct, immediate, and most perfect. The higher spirits cannot be drawn by these mediums, or by the spiritual seances. The higher spirits may communicate to those who are spiritually elevated, and are above the ordinary plane. But ordinary souls, which communicate, are earth-bound. They are not perfect. They are just imperfect as they were, when they had their material bodies or physical forms. After death the imperfect ones do not become perfect, simply because they have gone through the process of death. The process of death is not a purifier, as some people think. The process of death is nothing but a change of condition. Sometimes the process of death brings a state of coma to the departed souls. Then they do not know where they are. They cannot understand anything after death. Sometimes they wonder why their relatives and friends do not recognize them, and they are extremely

६। हन्ता च न्मन्यते हन्तुं हतश्चेन्मन्यते हतम् ।

उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥—कठ उपनिषद् १।२।१९

Cf. also *Bhagavad-Gita*, II. 19

७। नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।

न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥—भगवद्गीता २।२३

sorrowful. It is a painful state, and that may be considered as a state of the punishment they suffer. Sometimes they do not suffer, and they remain absolutely indifferent. All these conditions can be realized, and it is a fact that the souls continue to exist after death.

At the time of death the soul throws away the garment of the body. The body is just like a cloak. As we throw away our worn-out cloaks or garments and put on new ones, so the soul, after fulfilling its desire and purposes in this particular manifestation, throws it away, and assumes another form. It may be on a higher or a lower plane according to desires and tendencies. We must not forget that we make our own future by our thoughts and deeds. We create our own destinies. Nothing punishes us, and nothing rewards us, as we punish ourselves and we reward ourselves by our thoughts and deeds. God never punishes the wicked, nor rewards the virtuous, but the wicked punish themselves and the virtuous reward themselves by their thoughts and deeds. This is a central truth to the Hindu view of life. You do not have to blame the creator for your misdeeds, nor a creator of the evil, called Satan. Nor do we have to blame our parents, because they committed the sinful acts. We do not blame anyone, but we blame ourselves, if we have to blame at all.

The true self, although it may appear through different forms or different bodies, is itself formless. It is smaller than the smallest. It is so small that it can go through a solid wall. It can pass through anything, yet it is larger than the largest. It covers or pervades the universe, and at the same time it dwells in the cave of our heart. We can realize it through the grace of the supreme Being, when our mind is concentrated and can be made free from earthly desires and tendencies, and when our hearts and souls are purified. At this stage, we realize our true nature, and after realizing our own self, we become free from the sorrow.⁸ Then all sorrow, misery, pain, and suffering

८। अणोरणीयान् भहतो महीयान्

आत्माख्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।

तमक्रतुः पश्यति वीतशोको

धातु-प्रसादन्महिमानमात्मनः ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।२।२०

vanish away. They do not trouble our souls any more. If you can realize your own self at this moment, you will be free from all anxiety, all sorrow, and all suffering that you have at present.

In truth, you are above all sorrow, and you are free from all cares and anxieties. You are a child of God. You are a child of the immortal bliss. Why should you forget yourself and make yourself unhappy through ignorance? Wake up, and see your true nature. Feel its divine nature, and be free from the sorrow and the fear of death. The fear of death will not touch or affect you in any shape or manner. Know that you are child of bliss—'*amritasya putrah*'. Feel it, and be conscious of it. This is your ideal. Hold it, and make it integral of your being. You should first realize who you are, and the rest will take care of itself. Make this the first object of your life. You must know what will make you free from all sorrows and sufferings, and what will bring you happiness and blissfulness. Make you free from the fear of death, and make you realize your immortal nature. That you should know first.

You may run after making money, but what good will it do? Will it bring you real happiness? It may bring you bread and butter, clothes, furniture and amusements, etc. But do not forget that the material things cannot reveal your true self, and it is for this reason the wise throw away all their material things, and become free from all ties.* Because they know that these things of the earth have no power to bring unto them the permanent happiness. They have no power to make us free from fear of death, or to make us realize our immortal nature. The wise, therefore, do not care for them. The children of ignorance and self-delusion only care for those things. Those, who are deluded by the attractive nature of the objects of the senses, befool themselves. No one is responsible for them, they themselves are responsible for all their folly, and, therefore, they suffer. It should be remembered that all sufferings spring from ignorance, and all happiness proceeds from knowledge. Knowledge is the highest bliss. Man would rather die a thousand times than ignobly live in a state of ignorance. Such

९। अशरीरं शरीरेषु अनवस्थेष्ववस्थितम् ।

महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शान्ति ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।२।२२

ignoble life is not worth-living. But if you can recapture that spark of knowledge which will lift you above this material plane, why then you should consider yourself blessed? Because you have served the great end of life and have fulfilled the aim of your earthly existence. You become then truly divine. Otherwise you will have to grope in the darkness of ignorance, and you will have to suffer. At this stage you care for the thousand and one earthly things, and trouble your minds with the anxieties and sorrows of infinite variety. You may pray to God, but that prayer will not be fulfilled unless you have learnt by experience that this world is not your own and that you are a child of God. Then and then only your prayer will be heard and be fulfilled. Then you will be free from sorrow and all kinds of anxiety. That is the salvation or *mukti*. Salvation does not mean the heavenly life after death, but that salvation you will feel in this life. You will not have to wait until you have gone into the grave and when your bones are mouldered into dust, but when you are in the flesh and blood, you will feel the salvation through the knowledge of your own being as well as through the knowledge of the source, from which you have come to this world. Then you will understand the purpose of your life, and will realize the spiritual goal which is the central object to all living religions.

CHAPTER V

THE CHANGEABLE AND THE UNCHANGEABLE

We have learnt that behind the ceaseless changes, there is something unchanging and eternal, and that eternal substance of the universe is not only the ground or substratum of the phenomenal world, but is also the support of our own selves. It is the basis of our being. Our individualized and differentiated beings are supported by that same substance which is the support of the external world. This is a striking novel point in the study of Vedanta, which you will find nowhere else. Neither Kant, Schelling, Fichte, Hegel, nor Schopenhauer would explain so clearly this unity of existence, as you will find in Vedanta. The reality of the objective world is the same as the reality of the subjective world, and, in Vedanta alone, you will find that the reality of the objective world and the thing-in-itself of the subjective world are one and the same.

The reality behind the objective world, as we have already seen, is eternal and unchangeable, beginningless and endless. If we can show that the eternal, unchangeable, beginningless and endless substance is behind our ego, the basic unity of both the ego and the world is discovered. The ego of the individual self is only the manifestation of the eternal substance through the framework of the phenomenal existence. Now, what are the conditions of the phenomenal existence? The conditions are time, space, and causation. These three categories, or the limiting factors, are called in Sanskrit *maya*. *Maya* means these three conditions like time, space and causation. If we can rise above these conditions, we shall have a chance to discover that central something which is unchangeable and eternal. But it is very difficult to rise above these limiting conditions, because our very existence on this plane involves the limitations to space, time and law of causality, and, for that reason, it is subject to change. Anything that exists within time and is subject to the laws of nature, cannot be unchangeable, but it must be changeable. It cannot remain

stationary, as it is subject to evolution, growth, decay, and death, and, is therefore, contingent.

Our physical bodies are subject to birth, growth, decay, and death, as all other gross material bodies are. Take any kind of material body, inanimate or animate, and take any organism that is subject to birth and you will notice that it is also subject to death. Because birth is followed by death. Now, this is the inexorable logic of the phenomenal world. Our bodies are subject to birth, and we cannot keep them phenomenal for ever. They must pass away and die out. In fact, evolution implies change and involution. We are evolving constantly from one state into another, and rising or lowering according to the process, but at every step we are changing. We are not the same being twice physically. Even mentally we are not the same, being twice. We are constantly changing. In this realm of change, we cannot find anything that is immortal, because anything that is subject to birth, cannot be immortal; it must die. That is the inevitable law of nature, and, therefore, if we search after immortality, where shall we find it? Obviously we shall not find it within the realm of time, space and causation, but we shall discover it in the realm above the categories of time, space and causation.

The materialistic thinkers, in course of their investigation of the relative and phenomenal world, have not found anything that is unchangeable and immortal, and, consequently, they dearly cherish that there is no such thing as immortality, and there is no such thing as unchangeable existence. If you go to a scientist, or a physicist, or a chemist, or to any materialistic thinker and ask him whether he has found anything unchangeable, he will reply in the bold negative. He will argue that everything is subject to change, and, consequently, there is nothing which is eternal and immortal. If you follow his path, you will never find the immortal substance, because your studies are confined essentially to the conditions of time, space and causation. These are the inexorable limitations, and within these limitations nothing can be immortal and unchangeable. So you will rather become agnostics or atheists, if you try to follow the steps of the scientists or the materialists.

Yama, the Ruler of Death, says that the true basis of the self, or ego is something that is immutable. The true nature

of the self or ego is the *Atman*. It is the background of the ego, and is unchangeable and immortal. But it is very difficult to grasp it, because it lies hidden in the deepest core of our heart. You will have to make your intellect or reasoning faculties very sharp and keen to grasp that something which is really immortal,¹ and the main spirit of all seekers after Truth is to reach that immortal something. A real seeker after Truth is not to be satisfied with the domain of relativity of the changeable existence. He searches after the unchangeable. Reality, and that searching is the beginning of religion. Every religion tries to lead the human minds to that unchangeable something, although they may express that something under the various names and forms, such as God, Truth, Over-Soul, etc. But the chief motive is always and everywhere to reach that unchangeable something, which is man's supreme achievement.

Now, if you take away the problem of immortal life out of Christianity or any other religion, that religion would be useless. It would no longer be religion, but would simply be ethics. So the immortal life or immortality is the beginning of all religions. Again the Vedanta philosophy is not only a philosophy, but also a religion, so it deals with the question of immortality, solves that problem, and leads the human mind to the attainment of immortality. If you search within, you can discover this immortality. In the midst of all these changes, physical, sensuous, mental, or intellectual, there is constant quantity, unaffected by all the phenomenal empirical changes. If you sit in solitude and study your own self closely,

१। (a) एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढात्मा न प्रकाशते ।

दृश्यते त्वग्रया बुद्धया सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः ॥

—कठ उपनिषद् १।३।१२

(b) क्षुरस्य धारा निश्चिता दुरत्यया

दुर्गं पथस्तत् क्वयोरु वदन्ति ।—कठ उपनिषद् १।३।१४

(c) नाहं प्रकाशः सर्वस्य योगमायासमावृतः ।

मूढोऽहं नाभिजानाति शोके मामजमव्ययम् ॥

—भगवद्गीता ७।२।१५

Here मूढः means 'deluded' and that means 'want of intelligence'.

you will be gradually conscious of that constant or permanent quantity which is your own being. Take, for instance, the illustration that you have passed through various changes like the changes from babyhood to childhood, from childhood to youth, and from youth to maturity, and you will find that you have changed the babyhood into a young body, and the young body has gone away, and you have now a mature body. Every seventh year all the particles of your body are changed and renewed, but still you are the same person, and identity remains the same. But where is the foundation of that identity? It is not in matter, because matter is constantly changing; it is not in energy, because energy is also changing, but it is in your divine consciousness which does not change at all. Of course, the states of consciousness are changing, as they are always in flux, but the source of consciousness is the same. The source of consciousness is the basic consciousness, and is the constant quantity. It is the source of intelligence. It is shedding its light, making you feel that you exist at every step at every moment of your life. Before you can do anything, you must know that you are there, and that would be the foundation. What is the cause of that? The cause is the knowledge of your own being or existence. Then you will find the constant quantity within you, and that constant quantity is like an unchangeable witness (*sakshi*) in the midst of all the changes. For instance, you are sitting and watching your own mind, and there you will find certain thought bubbles up. It rises and plays its part, and goes down. Another comes up and takes its place, and plays a different part, and then goes down again. Another idea or sensation or perception comes in the form of a picture, and you watch it, and it goes down again. Perhaps anger comes, or some other passion comes, or hatred comes and you watch it. It goes down in course of time. But still you are there as the constant quantity; you are there as a witness to all these mental changes that are going on within you. That something which is the constant quantity, cannot be discovered by any scientific research. Science cannot reach it, as its domain is within the sense perceptions, and all its observations and experiments depend entirely upon the sense perceptions too. In fact, the constant quantity is not within the realm of the sense perception, but transcends it,

and at the same time it forms its background, by which we perceive the sense objects. The study of the percepts and the concepts will not reveal what we may call the witness or *sakshi*. The chair is illumined by light, but if you want to study the light, the chair will not help you. In the same way, the sense perceptions will not help you in studying your own self, because they have no separate existence from the self. They cannot reveal any truth, but truth is revealed by itself.¹ A certain sensation rises in the brain and your intellect interprets it in a certain way and forms a certain idea about which you are conscious of. But if that idea rises independent of your consciousness, it has no existence in relation to you. If something is going on in my brain, you do not feel it, and you cannot also do it. And, therefore, if you withdraw your consciousness from your body, say, for instance, from your toe, then the toe may be cut off and you would not know and feel it. If a part of your limbs be paralysed, that part may be cut off and you would not have any sensation at all. Thus it is the self-conscious ego that reveals all sense perceptions. Therefore, the study of objects of sense perceptions, which forms the realm of science, will not help you in understanding your own self. You will have to try some other method to reveal to you the mystery of your being. Science, as it deals only with the realm of sense perceptions, cannot explain the mystery of the self. It is the province of philosophy.

Philosophy begins where science ends. Philosophy is a more generalized knowledge than science. Science is a particular knowledge of a certain department, while philosophy is a general knowledge. Philosophy accepts all the conclusions of the different branches of science, and unifies them organically, and yields a truth which is beyond the province of science. Therefore, if you wish to know the constant entity which is within you, you cannot get much help from the study of the different branches of science, but you must learn to study yourselves. That is the best of all studies. Study yourself, and find out who you are and what you are, and that study will reveal to you that constant entity. First try to understand that immortal nature and true significance of immortality, and then

¹ Sankara has said that the supreme truth is the Brahman, and it is *vastutantra* and self-revealing

if you study a little further, you will find that constant entity has no beginning. You cannot think of its beginning. You cannot think even of your conscious entity as independent of your body. Your body had its beginning, but when and where did your conscious entity begin? You do not know, and nobody ever knows it, and, therefore, it is called birthless.

There are many theories regarding that constant entity which is called in Sanskrit the *Atman*. The *Atman* is the universal word, because there is no other word in the English language which refers to that constant and universal entity. Even the word 'soul' is not enough, and the word 'ego' is also not adequate, because they are individualized manifestations of that constant entity. Therefore, Vedanta uses the word *Atman* which means the unchangeable something within us, and which is the source of intelligence and existence, upon which our relative existence depends. That *Atman*, or the permanent entity, is birthless, because we can never think of its birth. Go as far back as possible in your imagination, and think of yourself as conscious of your non-existence, but you cannot, because consciousness and existence are simultaneous, and it is one and the same. You cannot exist without being conscious of your existence. That is a fact. Try to think of yourself as someone who is not conscious of your present condition. But you cannot. Because our existence and our conscious thought or consciousness are inseparable.

As you cannot think of your beginning, or of the time when you did not exist, so you cannot think of the time when you shall cease to exist. Therefore you are deathless. This is the strongest proof of your immortal nature, because you cannot think of your own non-existence. Try to think of yourself as dead. You cannot. You can think of yourself as looking at a dead body, but you cannot think of yourself as dead. You may stand by your dead body in imagination, but your consciousness is there, and, therefore, you are not dead. Again you can think of your dead body, but cannot think of the destruction of your self-consciousness. Consciousness is the constant quantity which is the essence of your being, and is deathless. It was never born. Now, if it be birthless and deathless, then we come to the conclusion that the Self is beyond the changes of the beginning and dissolution. If you cannot think of these

two as belonging to you, or affecting you, all the intermediate changes do not exist in you also. What are the intermediate changes? As I have already said that everything that is subject to birth must go like a plant through the process of evolution, and must decay, and die. A plant is born of a seed. It grows, it decays, and lastly it dies. So birth must be followed by growth. Again growth will reach its climax, and decay will set in. Decay is next followed by dissolution. But if we are the constant entity and that constant entity within us is birthless and deathless, then there can be no decay and growth. So it may seem to be very strange that we are not growing. If it be true, it may be well asked what is then growing or dying. Does our soul, or the *Atman*, grow, or die? No, it never falls under the ways of change, growth, or decay. It is above the changes. It is beyond growth and death. What grows or dies, is merely the body or mind or intellect or sense powers. These are the appearances and, therefore, they are subject to change like growth and decay. The soul never grows or dies. It is birthless and deathless. It is permanent and immortal.

Perfection belongs to our vital stuff, though we do not feel it for the lack of our insight into the true immortal nature. When we know it and realize that we are divine part of the absolute entity which is perfect, it becomes a peculiar revelation to us. Then we know ourselves as the sons of the immortal bliss. But it requires a long time to understand the unlimited potentialities of our soul. We often mouth the current idea that we are children of God, though very often we are innocent of its deep meaning. The mechanical mouthing of an idea, however noble, will not make us noble. We must feel in our heart its deep meaning, and when we understand the meaning of it, we become perfect. So we can be immortal by knowing our immortal nature which is birthless and deathless.

Therefore the Ruler of Death says that the constant entity within us is birthless and deathless. He first uses the word 'birthless', and next to that, he uses the word 'deathless'. By these two expressions he includes all the intermediate changes, and, therefore, that constant entity is free from growth and decay. It cannot be mutilated. Cut your limbs off, or your hands off, but that does not cut off your existence which is the very essence of your being. Your existence is the constant

quantity that remains the same, and it is the source of knowledge and intelligence. Your existence is indivisible, but it is always whole and integrated. The constant entity within us, which is birthless and deathless, is not an 'unintelligent something, but it is intelligence itself. It is all-intelligence. It is not like a piece of matter which is inert and insentient; on the contrary, it is the basis of all-intelligence and the source of all-knowledge. You may think that you derive the knowledge from outside by studies, experiments and observations, but no knowledge has ever come to you from outside. It has come out from within yourself. You have not gathered any knowledge from outside. The outside world has given you only the suggestions, and in your relation to them, you have derived the knowledge. As for an example, when you read a book, the book gives you certain suggestions, and in response or reaction to them, you draw out knowledge from within. Some minds do not however react because of the layer of darkness that encircles them. That is what we call *tamas*, or the dullness, or the stupidity.² It is a kind of layer in the brain over the mirror of the intelligence. It is a kind of layer of dust or dirt, and when that is removed, you are bright, you are ready to reflect and react, and then some suggestions come to you. So you can never gather any knowledge

² In the *Bhagavad Gita* we find it is said—

- २। (a) तमस्त्वज्ञानं विद्धि मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।
 प्रमादाल्खनिद्राभिस्तन्निवध्नाति भारत ॥
 (b) ज्ञानमावृत्य तु तमः प्रमादे सञ्चयत्युत ॥
 (c) अप्रकाशोऽप्रवृत्तिश्च प्रमादो मोह एव च ।
 तमस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे कुरुनन्दन ॥
 (d) प्रमादमोहौ तमसो भवतोऽज्ञानमेव च ॥

—भगवद्गीता १४।८, ९, १३, १७

Elsewhere in the *Bhagavad Gita* (III 38-39) desires for material things are mentioned, that cover the intelligence and discriminative power of human beings. There it is said.

धूमेनाव्रियते वह्निर्यथादर्शो मलेन च ।
 यथोल्बेनावृतो गर्भस्तथा तेनेदमावृतम् ॥

from the outside. If you are dull and stupid, you will not learn anything, even if you are thrown into the biggest library, or the laboratory, or into the company of the wisest men. It is a fact. Everyone knows it. You have the power to bring out the knowledge. Your knowledge cannot be acquired by any other means, because knowledge is already acquired, and it is now necessary to recognize it. But the question is where does the knowledge come from? Does it come from a source outside of you? No, it comes from that constant entity which is the infinite source of knowledge and intelligence. It may happen that you may not know certain things beyond a certain limit, but if you extend the range and take away the limitations, you will know everything. First of all, we know our own self i.e. our own personality and everything connected with our bodies, and then we know our surroundings, the external world. Then we go beyond the external world and beyond the limitations of our sense perceptions, and see things which we cannot perceive with our senses. The range of our knowledge becomes larger and larger, until it covers the whole universe. Then we become the part of the all-knowing Being. Omniscience is our birth-right, but we cannot express that on account of the limitations, through which our souls are manifesting their powers. But our *Atman* is all-intelligence and all-knowledge.

The *Atman* is absolutely unchangeable. It has not come out of anything or something. It is itself the divine intelligence, and this intelligence is not the result of any other factor. It is not the result of the combinations of matter, or materials of the atoms and the molecules. The atoms and the molecules can never produce any intelligence, but they rather draw their existence from this divine intelligence—'*tasya bhasa sarvamidam vibhati*'. The divine existence is inseparable from our 'constant entity', the *Atman*. But *from this constant entity nothing has come into existence, as it does not produce anything, being a

आवृत्तं ज्ञानमेतेन ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा ।

कामरूपेण कौन्तेय दुष्पूरेणानलेन च ॥

The desires are the outcome of nescience and the nescience is the property of the *tamas* (तमस्) ।

constant quantity in the universe. It is the centre of the universe. It is the most ancient (*puranam*), and yet at the same time when you discover it, it appears to be strikingly new. The moment you know your own being and realize your own essence, it will be a revelation to you. You did not know before the revelation that you are birthless and deathless and that you are full of intelligence, knowledge and consciousness. That is why it seems to you as new and wonderful. Every time a knower of the unchangeable truth discovers it, and at the same time it is larger than the largest. Which is the largest thing in the universe? The space is the largest thing. The sun, moon, stars—all these things exist in the space. We have no idea of anything grandeur, or more infinite, than the space. The conception of space is the largest, but the constant quantity or the self within us is larger than the space. The infinite space becomes finite when compared to the absolute Reality. How is that? Well, your conception of the space depends upon your own conscious existence. Because if you do not exist, your conception of space does not exist. And from another standpoint you can know that you are higher or larger than that space. A French philosopher said once that when we think of our body, it appears infinitesimally small, but when we think of our mind, it is larger than the solar system. You can verify it if you study astronomy. You will find that the starting point of astronomical calculation is the earth which is like a geometrical point that has no parts and so magnitude.

It can be shown that the radius of the earth does not exist, and the surface and the centre are one, and, therefore, it is a geometrical point. Then you can calculate how small is our earth. Think of the smallness of our little bodies compared to the universe. You cannot think of how small it is. Nothing can be smaller than our bodies, but yet our minds are so great that we can climb the distance from here to the sun and also to the remotest star. Think of it! In fact, with the help of our mind's eye we can envelop the whole external universe. How great we are! There you see that it is smaller than the smallest, and larger than the largest. It is an eternal truth, and all this smallness and greatness are relative terms. They can be applied to the same thing only from different standpoints. In fact, we are all absolute being, and this being dwells in each heart. It

is the Truth Search within your heart, and there you will find it.

The unchangeable substance, the *Atman* can be realized by one who has risen above all sorrows and sufferings, and, conversely, one who has realized and has become free from sorrow, misery and pain Can you have any pain, when you know you are the *Atman*? What sorrow can you have? Can you lose anything? No, the sun, moon, stars, and everything belong to you You are the existence and being. What can you lose in reality? You may lose this body, your clothes, house, and little relations, because you never possessed them. They are earthly and ephemeral, whereas your existence or being is heavenly and eternal. Do not be like worms, crawling on the earth, but be majestic, and be the children of immortal bliss. How can you think of yourselves as worms, crawling in the dust? No, that is not befitting, and that is unbecoming of you. Though knowledge of the *Atman* is very difficult to acquire, yet it is the only possession worth-striving for. It is revealed to you, when you invade the issue by your concentrated mind and spirit. You must rise above narrow attachments, petty attractions, and appears to him in new light, but, in reality, it is the oldest of the old. The moment you realize that something unchangeable resides in you, you will be able to say, as Christ said: 'I existed before Abraham was born'. And it is a fact. Everyone will be able to say that, because everyone of us is a child of God and immortal bliss. If we cannot hold this belief, that is not our fault, it is because we do not know it and we are not conscious of our own being.

So Vedanta tells us to be conscious of our true nature, and to know that unchangeable Reality amidst all changes of the universe. How foolish we are that we do not pay any attention to our unchangeable and immortal nature which is birthless and deathless. How foolish we are to think of ourselves as going to die and suffer when, in reality, we are free from death and suffering. If this knowledge comes to any one of us at this moment, the result will be fearlessness, the freedom from fear of death, and the attainment of immortality. Who can make us immortal, if we are not immortal already? But anything that is within time, space and causation, can never be changeless, and can never become immortal. If you try to make your

body immortal, you will fail, because it had its birth. Try to make your sense perceptions immortal, you will fail, because they had their origin or birth. Even your mental perceptions and intellectual perceptions will not remain constant, because they are under the categories of time, space and causation. But the source of knowledge or intelligence, which is your true being, by which you know you exist, you know you are sitting now and listening to me, is your Self which is immortal and unchangeable. Knowing that, you will know the whole universe. You will know the Reality which is the basis or background of the universe. If you know it, you will also know what is God. The very essence of God is the same as the essence of the *Atman*. Who knows that God exists? Who says that God exists? If we do not exist, how can God exist? Because the very knowledge of His existence depends upon our being in consciousness. This old and yet new substance, the Self, cannot die when the body is destroyed.

If the body be destroyed, the Self or *Atman* will continue to remain. The body is only the receptacle, or the gross medium, caused or produced by the energy to manifest the powers that are latent in the soul, and when the body is destroyed, the subtle substance of the body will remain constant. Science tells us that it is indestructible. Even the atoms and the molecules cannot be destroyed, but what is destroyed, is merely the form. The form of the chair can be destroyed if it is burnt, but the atoms and the molecules which make up the chair, will remain the same. They are not destroyed. So the form of the body may be destroyed, but the atoms and the molecules that make the body, can never be destroyed. The body is subject to destruction, and the form is subject to change all the time. We are dying every minute. Who can deny it? But in the midst of this ever-recurring death or change, if we have not realized our unchangeable constant quantity, what a great loss it is! Nothing short of it can make us happy. But the moment we have realized our immortal nature, the lasting happiness is bestowed upon us. That is immortality. Then we are free from death and from all limitations of the body, the senses, the sense perceptions, mental functions, intellectual perceptions and everything that makes us so full of imperfections.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* says: "If the killer thinks he kills, or

if the killed thinks that he is killed, both of them do not know that the soul can neither kill nor be killed"³. Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem *On Brahm*, records a faithful echo of this Indian idea. Emerson writes,

*If the Red Slayer think he has slain,
Or if the slain think he is slain
They know not the subtle ways
I keep and pass and turn again.*

This passage is, in fact, a faithful translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*. The conception is unique and thirdly received any prominent recognition in any other religion of the world. But, in India, it constituted always a corner-stone of the Hindu religion and philosophy. When I was lecturing in Massachusetts a few years ago, I quoted this verse, and explained the passage of Emerson in that poem, and many of the students of Emerson told me at that time that they could not understand the poem thoroughly. The obvious reason was their unacquaintance with the Eastern ideas and concepts. In fact, in Emerson's writings you will find that many of his significant utterances bear the stamp of Oriental ideas. His essay on *Immortality* bristles with the fervour of the Vedantic thoughts, and in a sense, he was the pioneer of the Vedanta philosophy in this Western country.

The *Atman*, as understood in the Indian philosophy, has no form. "It is smaller than the smallest, yet it is larger than the largest. It dwells in the cave of the human heart"⁴. Now you see that it is smaller than the smallest. But how can that be? Take a minute amoeba, or a bioplasm, or a germ of life, and if there be any manifestation of life in it, there is that constant source of intelligence. In an atom, it also exists, but the manifestation will be very small, compared to our manifestation, and still its existence cannot be denied. The germ of life is perhaps finer than an atom. It may be one hundredth or

३। हन्ता चेन्मन्यते हन्तुं हतश्चेन्मन्यते हतम् ।

उभौ तौ न विजानतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥—कठ उपनिषद् १।२-७९

४। अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयान्

आत्मास्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।—कठ उपनिषद् १।२।२०

thousandth or millionth part of an atom, and still it can become, through the process of evolution, a huge human being. It is smaller than the smallest, but vain sense cravings which are great obstacles in your path to spiritual progress. The cravings of the senses always draw the mind away from truth and divine knowledge. That is the reason why we should be cautious and watchful. Anything that drags us away from the centre of the universe, is against our moral passion. So we must shake it off, and embrace that which leads us onward towards eternal Being.

When you lie down in one place, your body lies down. But you will not, because you can go to any distance. The moment you stretch your mental sphere, you may go to the sun, moon, and stars. You can travel in the infinite space. In fact, your constant quantity, which is your true self, goes everywhere. Nothing can prevent its course. It is local, and yet is universal. You are sitting here, but you can send your mind around the world. You can concentrate your mind on the sun, and you can go beyond the sun to the more distant solar systems, and there you will discover truth. Think of those astronomers who are sitting in the observatories and are watching the movements of the stars through the telescopes. They have forgotten their existence on this plane, and their minds are reaching far beyond, though their bodies are constantly in one particular place.

Again, the *Atman* does not go anywhere, but it seems to be going everywhere. Now, for instance, when you go from one place to another, you think that your constant entity, the *Atman* moves from one place to another. But it does not move. Where does it move? It is just in the same spot or place. Now, this may appear to you very curious. Well, I will give you an illustration. Take a cup, or a jar, or a bottle, or an empty bottle, and move it from here to the street, or take it from here to a distant place. Now, you know the bottle, or the cup, or the jar is moving. and it is true that it is moving, but think of the space that is in the bottle. Is the space, confined in the jar, moving? When you move this jar from one place to another, the space appears to be moving with the jar. But does it move really? No, the space never moves. What does move then? It is the jar that moves. But can the jar exist outside of space?

No, it does not. Yet we say that it is moving. The very extension of the body means limitation in space. You are moving the body from one part of the space to another part. But does it really move? The space does not move. So the movement of the space is relative and apparent to the senses. In fact, it lies above the sense plane. Now from the standpoint of space, it does not move, and from the standpoint of that infinite Being or from that constant entity, which is beyond space, we do not move at all, and we are always in the same place. But our senses are so deceptive and our mind is so limited and our intellect is so imperfect, we think that we are moving constantly. Again the central substance appears to move, but yet it does not move. It appears to be born, but yet it is unborn. It is very difficult to know. It is beyond pleasure and pain. It is beyond happiness and unhappiness. You may have a terrible pain or suffering, or you may have pleasure and enjoyment, both the Self in us remains constant through all empirical changes. In fact, your immortal nature is not affected by pleasures or pain, physical or mental, but you remain the same. It is our body which is affected. The *Atman* is without change, yet it is constantly expressing itself through the changeful phenomena, and manifests itself through the body. Whoever knows the *Atman*, rises, above all sorrow and pain, and attains to lasting joy, bliss, and immortality. So know that *Atman*, and attain that absolute peace and happiness. Rise above death, going beyond changes and understanding the laws of nature, and remain unaffected in the changes of the phenomenal world. And then having understood your true Self, you will know the Reality of the universe.

CHAPTER VI

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ABSOLUTE

A preliminary knowledge of the Absolute is a necessary precondition for unravelling the mystery of death. The Absolute is not very far away from us; on the contrary, it is within us. It is the ultimate Reality of the universe. It is the support or background (*adhithana*) of all phenomena. It is formless, yet it pervades all forms. It is unchangeable, yet it is in the midst of all changes. Phenomenal changes are going on from eternity to eternity, but the centre of all changes is unchangeable. That unchangeable something is the absolute Truth. We can find in the midst of phenomena that something which does not change, and that is the absolute Truth. It is very difficult to discover it. Its realization involves hard struggling. Our phenomenal knowledge and scholarly pursuits merely give us an idea of the unchangeable substance, the *Atman*. Very few people can realize it. Book reading or book learning does not help us much in the matter. It is beyond the reach of mind and intellect. It is beyond words. Therefore, the Ruler of Death says here: "This eternal Truth cannot be attained by reading scriptures".¹ You know all the scriptures pretend to reveal the absolute Truth, but the scriptures are, at their best, an attempt to register in words the highest truth. They give men vision and nothing else. Beyond that, the scriptures are of no use. The Vedas and the other scriptures cannot reveal the eternal truth. The Bible also cannot reveal it. You may read the Bible for years together, but that by itself will not help you to realize the highest truth. You may get some idea and you may imagine certain things, but imagination is not realization. Realization is quite a different thing. You will have to feel its presence in your soul, and you will have to become one with it, otherwise it will remain unknown and unknowable to you forever and ever.

१। नायमात्वा प्रवचनेन लब्ध्या न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।

The scientists of our generation have sought to gain a knowledge of the soul, the being, the doer, and the thinker, but they have failed miserably. They vivisection the brain, but they do not find anything like the soul. The brain is a dead matter. There is no instrument by which we can weigh or capture or measure the soul which is the essence of our being. It is the most vital and precious thing in the universe, and through it everything else has become vital. If you become unconscious, the vast world around you will vanish right at that moment. Where will you then be ? Perhaps you do not know it. Thus everything has its value and significance only in relation to consciousness. The sun would not exist if we were not conscious of it. So it exists only in relation to us. What difference does it make whether there is sun or not, if I am unconscious ? So, it is through our consciousness alone the knowledge of everything becomes possible. We enjoy the phenomenal universe ; we enjoy all the pleasure, and we suffer pain and know that there is such a thing as wonderful feeling or sensation through consciousness. Through the same consciousness we enjoy pleasure. It is the essence of our being. It is the true Self, the source of all knowledge.

We struggle hard to have things of the phenomenal world ; we strive for the accumulation of wealth and the possession of other material things, but what significance will they carry to us at the time of death when we become absolutely unconscious of this world ? Will this world still continue to exist for us ? No, as soon as we die, it will disappear like a dream. How do we know that we are not going into dreamland after death ? After death we may not be conscious of things, of which we are conscious now, but we will be conscious of something on that plane.

A millionaire, or a miser, who is just hoarding wealth all the time, will carry his desires with him to amass fortune, but he would not find any gross substance like money or wealth after death. But that desire will burn him, and he will suffer, because it will never be manifested in its gross form there. It will not be satisfied after death. How would you like to have the desire for drink, or for enjoying pleasure, or for dancing, when there is no dance, when there is nothing to drink, and when there is no food to eat, but you have the hunger all the

time ? Will that state be very pleasant ? Obviously not. But such will be our condition after death, because the desires for things will continue to remain in our minds. They do not exist in the world outside of ourselves. They are rooted in us, and we carry them even after death. They are parts of our being. But the material objects, by which we gratify those desires, will remain here. Most people miss the vital point. We must think about the condition which we are going to have in future. We must not act foolishly, but we must be cautious and wise in our behaviour. We must prepare ourselves to face any condition that may come to us in the life beyond death.

You have perhaps heard many times about yourself, but that by itself will be of no avail. Simply listening to the sermons about the self will not reveal the self. You will have to feel it, to know it, and to become one with it. You must love it deeply, nay, passionately, and love will bring you closer to it.

Again, mere hearing of the sermons is not the same as realization. To become immortal is to become one with the absolute Truth. So simply by hearing we cannot attain to it. How can we then attain to it ? It is only by knowing it. Or simply we must love it, and love it as the best and the dearest thing, and through love we will get it. But what do we mean by 'love' ? Love means a mutual attraction. It is an attraction of the soul, and when the soul is attracted to any sense object, it remains on the sense plane. That is what we call human love or affection. It is related to the sense plane, but true love is related to God. When the soul of a man is attracted to the highest, divine love begins to manifest itself. Otherwise, love is only a reflection or a refraction of true divine love. Human love is the reflection of divine love, and it manifests through the sense plane. If you put a stick or a pencil into a glass of water, the reflection is refracted. It is not straight, but it appears crooked on account of the density of the water. Similarly, when the divine love begins to manifest through the human or the sense plane, the imperfection of the sense plane makes it appear crooked, and that is the reason why we get so mixed up. We cannot find exactly the difference that exists between divine love and human affection. We mistake one for the other, and get into trouble. Christ said: "Ask, and it shall be given

you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you".² Christ was not the first teacher who declared it. This was pronounced in India at least 1500 years before Christ was born. What is meant by 'knock, and it shall be opened unto you' ? The 'knock' must proceed from intense longing. That longing will force the door open, which is now closed. The door of the soul is closed. The tunnel, by which the soul is connected with the Infinite, is not open to ordinary vision. It is only through that intense longing and love for the highest that we can open that door. The spiritual power, enlightenment, and wisdom will then flow into our souls, and peace and happiness will then pervade our being. Whoever has that intense longing for the highest, will attain to it in the end. That is, he will realize the Absolute. That is the most wonderful thing.

It is through love that we get it ; but that love is not human love. The human love is not the real love. The real love is different. The real love, or the divine love, is an attraction of the soul for the highest. It is the divine Godliness. God is love, and love is God. But if human love were God, there would not have been any sorrow or suffering in this world, because every human being has in him some kind of love and some kind of object. The human love brings in its train a sense of dullness and satiety, while divine love produces an unfading joy. Love of the highest presupposes for its cultivation non-love for the non-highest. The world, we live in, does not represent the highest object of love and worship. We must withdraw our mind from it, and focus it on God alone. God is the highest good. To seek it is to seek the highest. Search for it requires deep longing for it. That intense longing is the pathway to God-realization. Though that longing is very rare, yet it is the only way by which the absolute truth is revealed before our divine vision. But so long as we have not direct experience of what this phenomenal world is made up of, we cannot have that required longing. When we have understood what this phenomenal world is made up of, when we have known the real nature of the phenomenal world, when we have understood the various laws that govern our phenomenal life,

² St. Matthew, VII. 7

and when we have learnt the true purpose of our life, all material things will lose their lure for us. They will then appear as not worth-having. The friends and relatives, howsoever valuable from material point of view, appear pitifully insignificant, when that longing for the highest perfection moves our minds. They will stand in our way. They would not let us go beyond their reach. They will drag us down, unless we possess what is called non-attachment and renunciation. Why do the great souls renounce their relatives and friends? Because they find them as obstacles in their path to God-realization. They stand and distract, and the distraction they feel so strongly that they do not want to waste their energy to overcome the distraction. But when renunciation comes, all kinds of relations appear to be as relations of God, and not of any individual. Friends also appear as nothing but children of God. In that state, everything appears different. He sees the reality of things, and so the whole world that is changeable, will vanish with all its relations and attractions. Then the fleeting world seems to him like a dream. We do not know that we are dreaming now. How can we know unless we wake up? It is very difficult to feel it so long we are in a dream of ignorance. But there comes a time in every soul, when he feels that everything he has experienced during his lifetime, has passed away like dreams, leaving only impressions, pleasant or unpleasant. Until we go through diverse experiences, we will have to knock our heads against stone walls, and get hurt. That will do us good. We need blows, and those blows will awaken us, and we must receive them with great delight. They are the best teachers and best friends in the world. All these sweet and kind words simply keep us on the plane of dreams, but blows bring out the latent powers.

Unless we have checked all our wicked habits, and corrected ourselves, and purified our hearts and souls, we are not ready to reach the Absolute. If there be the slightest desire for anything that is on the lowest plane, we cannot go up, and we will be tied down. We have come to this world to be thorough with our experience which we need. If we have had enough of experiences, we should not run after them. We should turn our mind away from the world, and send it upward to the highest plane. We should try to understand the source from

where we have come to this world and where we are going. This phenomenal life is not merely a dream, but it has its purpose. Or it might be a dream, but it is a reality at present. It may appear to us as a dream in future, but now it is a very tangible reality. It cannot be denied in our life in this world. There is a real purpose, and that purpose must be fulfilled. But how have we fulfilled it? That is for us to decide in silence, when we are all alone and not distracted by anybody. We should study our own self. We should study what we have accomplished in this life, how much we have gained and how much richer we have become. Then we can tell. We do not have to hide anything from our own self. We also know how much we have gained in this life, and how much we have accomplished. And what else we wish to accomplish, we go away and do it. So we are our own master. If we have not known the purpose of our life, we should find it out. If we have not fulfilled it, we should make up our mind, and go ahead, and finish it. Then our mind will be in peace. And unless we keep our mind in absolute peace, how can we expect to reach the highest? If little things attract and drag us down and make us restless and disturb the peace of our mind, we are not fit to reach the highest. So we should make our mind firm like a rock, unmoved by storms and changes that are going on around us. If a storm of passion comes, and if we cannot keep our peace, what can we accomplish? We are then too weak, and are not fit to enter the kingdom of Heaven. So we should be firm like a mountain, and remain unmoved by those storms of passions and desires and ambitions. What do they amount to? They come and go, but we remain firm. We should hold peace, and rise above it. Then Godliness will be the ornament of our character. Nothing else is to be accomplished then. God remains firm and unshaken under all conditions. We should hold that ideal and remain like that, then we are Godly, and are Divine.

If Jesus could not have endured the crucifixion, nobody would have worshipped him. That was not supernatural. It was his nature; otherwise, he would not have been Christ. That is only the realization. We go through many crucifixions during our lifetime, and if we cannot remain firm and hold peace and keep our mind on absolute rest, we are not worthy

of Christ. It is the easiest thing to understand and to practise. That is the whole of Christianity. Religion is the simplest truth in the world. We make it the most complicated and hideous through our ignorance, by adopting lots of things, doctrines, creeds, ceremonials, and useless non-essential dogmas. Search and enter into their spirit, and there you will find universal religion. It is everywhere the same. It is one. Human minds make it many, because they add their own peculiarities to the religion, and make it different. True religion is the relation between the soul and God. When that is realized, the purpose of religion is served, and that is eternal religion. That is what we should understand and follow and live up to. Whether God is sitting on a throne with two hands and has a rod in His right hand to punish the wicked or to reward the virtuous, is none of our business. Throw them away. God will not be hurt. He will not punish you, if you throw away all superstitions. He will love you all the more. Truth will never punish you, when you see the follies of human minds. Truth will embrace you, and make you a part of its being. Attainment of *samadhi* is necessary. *Samadhi* means superconsciousness or Godconsciousness. Be conscious of that Divinity within you, and feel its presence. How can you feel its presence? By knowing your own self and by understanding yourself, because the moment you try to know yourself, you find that you get an independent idea that you depend on something which is the reality behind you. The ego cannot exist, if there be no source of intelligence and consciousness behind it. You cannot think, you cannot see anything, and you cannot feel anything, if you have not that source of intelligence behind the ego or thinker. That is the simplest thing, and that consciousness we must have. That will be the starting point. Then you find the relation which you bear to the universe. If our minds are constantly distracted by the things of the world, we forget our own self. Go to the crowded streets of New York or any other cities, and see there how many people are thinking of their higher Self. They are thinking how they can rob others, how they can cheat others, and how they can accumulate lots of rubbish which they value at so many gold pieces. What is the value of gold? Chemically it has no value, and commercially it has the greatest value. Why should we be on the commercial plane, if we are

searching after the absolute Truth ? Why should not we take the chemical view and see how molecules and atoms after going through a certain process appear as gold ? That is nothing. That cannot belong to your soul. It is a dead matter. But under the present condition you will have to live, and buy your clothes and pay the rent. Therefore you want to get away from a city of luxury and splendour, and go to a cheaper place, where you do not need so much. Go to the forest and you do not need anything. The society of the human beings and all these attractions are temporary. They do not amount too much. What do they amount to. They give you some experiences, and you learn some lessons, and when you have learnt that, you get out of it. You need not spend whole lifetime in following those ideals of society and social advantages. They have no meaning. Sometimes when you are young and full of enthusiasm, desires and ambition, these appear to be attractive, but after gaining some experience and receiving some blows and learning the inner working out of all the lives of those society-people, you find this as waste of time, and the sooner you get out, the better it is for you. And then you think of yourself and of God and also of what will happen to you after death. All these questions will come then, and you will try to solve them.

The Absolute swallows up everything. He is the destroyer of death. Dissolution destroys everything, but the destroyer of death is that Absolute. Death does not exist then. All the phenomena of the sense plane with all its attractions are swallowed up by the Absolute. 'The Absolute eats up, as it were, all these things, and death is the condiment. The names and forms of phenomena are like the food and death is the sauce'.³ When we reach the Absolute, all these things disappear. The moment you withdraw yourself from the sense plane, the external world with all its beauty is gone. If you do not have eye-sight, or if you are colour-blind, when the colour is gone, this world would not be attractive at all. It is only the eye that makes all this attraction. The colour is nothing but a

३ । यस्य ब्रह्म च क्षत्रञ्च उभे भवत ओदनः ।

मृत्युर्यस्योपसेचनं क इत्या वेद यज्ञ सः ॥—कठ उपनिषद् १।२।२८

certain state of vibration, and you cannot depend upon that. You do not see anything outside, but you only imagine that you see external things, and there some other changes take place and that is all, and then your ego interprets that vibration into sense, and you think you are seeing. You do not see anything outside. You have no power to see anything outside. You are not even conscious of the inverted image of the object on the retina. So all these beautiful flowers and things are the images of certain things which you have never seen. We project our sensations into the external world, and feel happy. Science has opened our eyes to these things. Still we are so much in ignorance that we cannot wake up. We cannot see things straight. We cannot realize things as they are in reality. If you withdraw your mind from the organ of hearing, there is no more sound in the world, but will prevail dead silence. The sounds may go on, that will have nothing to do with you. If you withdraw your mind from the sense of touch, you will feel nothing hard or soft or hot or cold. Our five senses have made this world which we feel. When our mind is withdrawn from these five senses, the whole world is changed. Other people may not believe, because they have five senses and their mind is attached to those five senses, and, consequently, they feel as you felt before you had withdrawn. Analyze your own perceptions, and see things as they are. Do not be fools, and do not be fooled by anybody. If you are a seeker after the absolute Truth, you cannot remain a fool any more, and that is what Vedanta teaches. It tells why you people live like fools

Let people see things as they are in reality and live in harmony with the Reality, and not with those images and attractions which are only on the surface. They do not amount too much. Of course, they do amount to a good deal to persons who are living on this plane. If you are living on the surface, of course, these attractions are quite necessary to you. We do not doubt that. But from the standpoint of the transcendental Reality or Absolute, they are all very unimportant things and transitory. They do not enrich the soul. Our whole life with all its experiences makes up a character. All the experiences that we have gathered during our lifetime, will vanish just after death, but they will leave an impression upon our character,

and that character will remain with us. We have received a great many impressions through our past experiences, and those impressions are with us, and will remain with us. We cannot get rid of them very easily. Everything that we have suffered, or everything that we have enjoyed, has left a stamp upon our character. We take it with us, and that impression is the cause of our future desire, which will be of a similar nature, and will force us to repeat the same experience over and over again. If we study our own life, we will find that it is so even now. The same thing that we have enjoyed we want to be repeated, and we cannot help it. This gives us a great lesson. The character, which we have built by our thoughts and deeds and through our desires, is a more permanent thing than our physical body, and all the possessions we have.

So we should be careful. If we remember that, it will help us a great deal in our existence throughout eternity. We must not be unmindful of this. Another thing we should remember that by our character we create our destiny and create our future. Whatever we shall be in future, we are sowing its seed now; and if we have sown wheat, we cannot expect to reap peas, but we must get wheat. This is inexorable. We cannot get peas from wheat, and it is an eternal law. We are all bound and chained down by that law. 'Whatsoever thou sowest thou shalt reap'. So whatever we think of, whatever we do and whatever we experience, remember this law that we are under this law of action and reaction at every moment of our life. If we do not forget it, we would never be able to do anything wrong. There is no need of any fear of punishment, hell-fire or Devil. Throw them overboard in the mid-ocean. They do not do any good. They simply keep the people in ignorance and superstition. But this is the law that we cannot get peas, if we sow wheat, and it will appeal to everybody. The whole future is built upon this law, which we see everyday before our eyes. If we wish to understand the mystery of death, we must first understand this law.

Having described the Absolute and its relation to the universe, the Ruler of Death now describes the relation of the individual ego to the Absolute. Two have entered into the cave of the heart, dwelling on the highest summit of the spiritual space. Seers of Truth say that the one is like the self-efful-

gent sun, the other is like the image or reflection.¹ The one is like a witness, while the other eats the fruits of its own thoughts and deeds. So there are two things within us: the one is the eternal, absolute and unchangeable substance, and the other is the ego, the doer, thinker, actor, enjoyer, and sufferer. The relation between the two is like the relation of a reflection of the sun to the real sun.² The one is like the self-effulgent sun in all its glory, and is never affected by any changes, terrestrial or atmospheric. The sun is not changed. Although the clouds may cover the sun, yet it shines in its own glory; and its self-effulgence is never disturbed, because human eyes cannot see it on a rainy day, but it is in own self-effulgence all the time. Similarly, the absolute self-effulgent Being is in the cave of our hearts in its all glory. We may not know it or see it, but it exists. We may live under the cloud of ignorance, superstitions, doubts and all kinds of misunderstandings, but still that does not affect the absolute Reality. The other is the image or reflection. The other is known as ego or *jivatman*. The ego is one who knows that you are sitting here and I am talking. It has nothing to do with the body, but it works through the body and the senses. It is conscious of everything, connected with the body. In fact, the doer, thinker, or enjoyer reaps the results of all thoughts and deeds, but the other remains like a witness. The witnessing principle is never changed by the changes of the body or senses or mental conditions. It is always above all mental conditions. Your mind may be covered with a cloud of anger or hatred or love or passion, but that witness-like something is above all these, and it is not affected. The ego thinks that I am angry, I have hatred, I am loving, I am passionate, I have this desire, etc. The ego thinks of all these things, but the witness-like Reality (*sakshi-chaitanya*) within us is not affected by the changes. These

१। ऋतं पिवन्तौ सुकृतस्य लोके

गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्द्धे ।

छायातपौ ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति

पञ्चामयो ये च त्रिणाचिकेताः ॥—कठ उपनिषद् १।३।१

² It can be compared with the *bimba-pratibimba* theory of Vedanta.

thoughts and feelings come like clouds, and the absolute Reality remains like the sun.

The revelation of relation between the image and the Reality is most wonderful. Now, why is it called an image? You know that the reflection of the sun cannot exist if there be no sun. So the existence of the reflection is not an independent existence, as the reflection of the sun depends upon the existence of the sun. So the existence of the ego is not an independent existence, but it depends upon that witness-like self-effulgent sun. The image of a thing depends upon the thing itself. The face which you see in a mirror, cannot exist by itself, if it were not dependent upon your face. You may have a photograph, but the photograph of a face has no dependent existence, because it depends upon the existence of the human face which is the reality. If that photograph thinks that it exists all by itself and it never depended upon any human face, then it would not be correct. And, therefore, if an ego thinks that it exists independent of that witness-like Reality, it would be foolish.

Here is a beautiful illustration which is very old, and, at the same time, which is very helpful. It is the illustration of a chariot. This is an old illustration that the body is like a chariot.¹ Those, who have read Plato's philosophy, will remember this familiar illustration. Plato got it from India. The *Atman* or the true Self is to be known as the rider sitting on a chariot. The chariot is the gross physical body, and intellect is the charioteer and the mind is the reins. The senses may be compared to horses, and the objects of the senses, to the roads. The five senses like eye, ear, nose, power of taste and touch are the principal senses. Of course, these may be subdivided into many others, but these are the principal ones. These are the horses, and the objects of the senses are the roads that the horses are travelling on, the body is the chariot and the mind is the reins. Now, who holds these horses? The holder is the charioteer, the intellect. It is the soul or *Atman*. So you see that the soul is the witness-like (*sakshi*) thing beyond intellect, beyond mind, and beyond sense perception. Having given that illustration, the Ruler of Death says: When the highest

¹ The ancient upanishadic idea

spirit is in union with the body, the senses and the mind, then the wise man calls him the enjoyer. Where is the ego then ? The ego is that state in which the highest, the rider, is connected with and closely related to the intellect, mind, and sense powers. The mind and mental functions, intellect and intellectual functions, and the witness-like Spirit or the *Atman* are connected with the ego. The ego is just like a bundle of all these things. If you separate them, then the ego appears to be nothing but a reflection, and as the reflection cannot exist unless there is something, upon which it is reflected, so the ego cannot exist, if there be no mind, intellect, and sense power. So long as these exist, there is the ego, and this ego is the enjoyer and thinker (*bhokta* and *mantha*).

You can analyze in your own self, and find out where is the ego and where is the witness-like something. We often hear of the divine spark within us, but that divine spark is the witness. It is the source of intelligence ; it is the background of the ego ; it is the essence of our being. So, when we understand our ego as well as the witness-like Reality, which is the divine spark within us, then we understand the relation between them, and then we know that after death the ego will continue to exist. The sense powers we will have, the mind we will retain, and the intellect will be with us after the body is dead and gone. The body is nothing but a machine. It is an instrument which this ego has manufactured and kept up, in order to gain experiences, to fulfil certain desires, and to build up the character. The end of all these experiences will come, when the ego has realized its relation with the Absolute. Then everything will be accomplished, and perfection will be reached. Until then we will have to go on struggling, reaping the results of our thoughts and deeds, and gaining experience after experience so that we can know exactly what this world is made up of, what the purpose of life is, and where is the goal ; and when we have come to know of the goal, then the purpose of evolution is finished, and we attain to absolute immortality, eternal peace, and unending bliss.

CHAPTER VII

THE EGO AND THE TRUE SELF

We are confronted with various burning questions, whenever we try to study the mystery of death, and those questions are: What is the nature of our being? What is the soul life? Is the soul life eternal or not? What is the relation of the ego to the universe? What is ego and the true self? Those are some of the most important questions that face us in our pursuit of the mystery of death. A right solution of those vital questions gives us knowledge about what happens after death. And, there fore, Yama, the Ruler of Death, saw while describing the relation of the individual ego to God: "Two have entered into the cave of the heart, dwelling on the summit of the spiritual space".¹ The seers of Truth say that the one is like the self-effulgent sun, and the other is like his image or reflection; the one is like the witness, while the other eats the fruits of its own thoughts and deeds. It is tremendously difficult to clearly grasp this vital point. Many thinking minds have often been deluded in trying to grasp this most subtle subject. You will find that the philosophers vary and the scientists disagree in trying to explain the nature of the soul, the nature of God, etc., The religions try to explain the true nature of God, but there have been a bewildering diversity of opinions on the issue. The idea which is common to Christianity, is that God created man in His own image. The Christians learn this lesson in their childhood from the Sunday Schools, and they cherish it even when they are grown up. But it is to be regretted that such minds, as can grasp the real meaning of the term 'image', are very rare. It is said that man is created in the image of God. Here 'man' stands for all human beings. The reference is not to the human body, because the human body

१। ऋतं पिबन्तौ सुकुतस्य लोके

गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्द्धे ।—कठ उपनिषद् १।३।१

is not always perfect, and, in fact, it has a great many limitations. So, if the imperfect human body were created in the image of God, God also must share all those imperfections in common with the creation. The image is a reflection of the original. It is for this and various other reasons, we cannot think that the human form alone is referred to by the word 'image'. On the contrary, the word 'image' refers to the 'ego' or the 'soul'. Many people do not believe in the existence of the soul. Are they not created in the image of God? Yes, they are, but they do not know it. Their non-knowledge does not prove its non-existence. You may not believe in your own existence as a soul and as an entity, but still you are the image of God. This is the most wonderful idea we get from the verse which I have just explained to you.

Vedanta explains the image of God in its most spiritual sense, and not in its material sense. The Western minds are often frightfully literal, that is, they try to understand very literally that if man be the image of God, God must be just like a human being. They jump to that unwarranted conclusion from that analogy. I do not blame them, because they are just like children in spiritual life. They cannot grasp the nature of their soul, nor they ever cared for it, but if you tell them that God created man in His own image, then that God must be like a man—masculine—with two hands, a huge Being sitting on a throne, and we are all His image. But that idea is very gross, and the quality that we attribute to God, is shockingly crude. We ascribe to God a human form only to limit his limitless existence. Such anthropomorphic conception represents the first stage of man's progress to spiritual life. At this stage, we think of God as a human being, and we try to explain everything in human terms, although the qualities or attributes, which we give Him, are infinitely magnified than the ordinary qualities of ordinary mortals. But nevertheless, He is human, he is personal, and he is limited by a form. In studying the Jewish scriptures, the Old Testament, we will find the conception of God, which Moses and all the Elders had, was a human conception, and we need not blame the Christians of today who still believe in that kind of a personal God with human attributes and a human form, because they are brought up with that idea. But when we try to understand the true

meaning of the passage that God created man in His own image, we find great difficulties. The students of Vedanta can easily grasp the meaning, because they do not think of a human God when they try to explain the word 'image.' The ego or the individual soul is the image of God, who is the Spirit. He is the universal spirit. He is like the self-effulgent sun, and each individual soul is like a reflection of the sun on the mirror of the intellect. As the reflection cannot exist without being related to the object of reflection, so the individual soul cannot exist without being closely related to the Spirit, whose reflection it is. If you hold a mirror in the sun, you will see the reflection, but that reflection would be impossible if there were no sun, or if the sun were covered by dense clouds. So the reflection is only possible when there is sun overhead, and if we are the reflections or images of God, then we must be of similar nature, because the reflection of the sun cannot be square or triangular, but round, self-effulgent and bright, and that is our true nature, if we are created in the image of God. And if we are created in the image of God, then we are bright and we are spirits. But where is that self-effulgent sun, the Being, whose reflections the individual souls are? He is not very far from us. He is within us and around us, though He is not visible to the eyes. No sense powers can reveal His presence. The materialistic thinkers and the scientists try to understand God through sense powers, and when they fail, they deny His existence. But they never think for a moment that the sense powers exist in and through God and cannot reveal God. The individual souls also cannot be revealed by sense powers. Only the manifestation of certain activities can be perceived by the senses, and that is all. You cannot tell whether there is a soul in another person or not, but you can imagine that that person is living when he moves, talks, or does certain things. You can guess and infer by observing certain acts, but the Reality of the real nature is always imperceptible by our senses. The egos cannot be perceived by our senses if they do not assume certain forms.

Now we have understood the relation between God and the individual ego. God himself is sexless. He is both the father and the mother of the universe, and if He is sexless, the individual soul is also sexless. There are some sects who believe in the

sex of souls. The Swedenborgians believe in the sex of souls. They hold that the males will remain males forever, and females will remain females forever. That idea is very limited. It does not go far enough. At first the idea seems to be correct, but when you go a little deeper into your true nature, you find that sex conditions are more or less related to the body and the mind, but not to the soul. The soul is higher than sex. There is no masculine soul and no feminine soul, because both are all children of God.

The individual soul is to be considered as a nexus, the connecting link between the world of senses and the realm of the Absolute. It is like a bridge. If we wish to go to the realm of the Absolute, we must go over that bridge, and, therefore, the individual soul or the ego is called the mediator, the bridge. The Christians call it Christ. Christ means the individual soul or the ego which is the mediator, which connects the phenomenal world with the Absolute. We cannot go to the realm of Divinity by any other way except over the bridge of our souls. So, if you wish to know God, first know yourself. That is the surest way. If you wish to know Christ, know yourself, and there you will find Christ. Christ does not mean any ordinary human being, but it refers to the child of God. We are all children of God, and when we will realize that truth, we will realize Christ. The historical Christ is limited by time and place, but the spiritual Christ is above the categories of space and time, and he is eternal by individual soul. Spiritual Christ dwells in every individual soul from the beginningless past, and it is the real Christ. He is the mediator. He signifies the individual soul in man. Similarly the soul is eternal, and it is also immortal. But we cannot attain to immortality, unless we have gone over the bridge of our own souls, which alone can lead us to the abode of immortality. Let us now understand the nature of this bridge, the mediator between the mortal and the immortal.

We can grasp the nature of our soul by means of analysis and also by studying our own self as well as by understanding our own being. None can give us that supreme knowledge. External teachers may give you certain suggestions, but in the last resort, it is up to you to work out your salvation. Each individual must find out for himself where the soul is and

what it is like. It is the most difficult task, yet it must be courageously undertaken. It is difficult, when we are lazy or living on the sense plane, when we try to delude ourselves by false thinking. So long as we are sleeping in self-delusion, it is difficult to get it. But if we are awakened, and if we have a genuine longing for the Truth, it is easy of achievement. Those people who say: "Oh, we are so busy, we have to do so many things, and we have no time to think of ourselves, to think of God", are deluding themselves, and are wasting their energy fruitlessly. They are only working for their bread and butter and a little sense pleasure. After hard labour they retire to bed, and wake up to labour again. And this round of works of sleeping, eating and drinking is eternally going on time. There is no rest. They neglect their own selves. The ordinary people do not open their eyes, and do not know anything beyond certain limit. But man who has sense and has understanding, will pity these souls as to what they are doing and what they are trying to accomplish, and how foolish they are to waste their time and energy for things which do not amount to anything and which do not bring any consolation, happiness, and knowledge of our self, our own being, and our relation to God. It does not explain to us how we are going to gain immortality, nor does it tell us whether we are at all capable of immortality. But we have no time to seriously discuss these vital issues. Sad it is to think and to live under degrading conditions.

In order to analyse ourselves and also to find out the relation between the senses, mind, intellect, and the egos, we must make a picture. Here the Ruler of Death gives an illustration which may help the seekers after the absolute Truth. That illustration is as follows: "Think of your body as like a chariot. The rider is the soul, and the horses are the senses, i.e. the sense organs and sense powers are the horses. The driver is the intellect, and the mind is the reins. The objects of the senses are the roads where these horses are travelling or running. Now, make a picture of that in your mind that you are a chariot, your true self is the rider, and the horses are the sense powers which are going in different directions. Then you will be able to understand the relation between the senses, sense powers, mind, and intellect and your conscious ego, and

you will also understand how they exist and what relations they bear to each other".²

Now, if the rider be our true Self which is called in Sanskrit the *Atman*, which is the eternal and immortal part of our own self as well as the prime mover of our thoughts and actions, then the rider itself is above and beyond all imperfections. It is not affected by the sensation of pleasure or pain, but the ego (*jivatman*) is affected. The thinker, the doer, and the knower of pain is not the true Self, but it is the thinking man, eating man, drinking man, planning man and working man. It is the ego which is imbued with I-consciousness. But behind this ego, you will find the rider, the true Self. This ego is a combination of the true Self, the intellect, the mind, and the sense powers. It is all combined. When all these different powers are fused into a whole, that whole is the ordinary ego. The ordinary man or woman who thinks, 'I am the son or daughter of Mr. So-and-so, I have my children, my family, or my work to do', is the mortal ego. But the mortal man is, in reality, an immortal entity, or it can be said that the immortal entity forms the background of the mortal man or the ego who thinks and feels. Now, in this chariot, the driver is responsible for all the good and evil deeds which are done, or which are received. If the driver be not careful, the horses will drag the chariot down into the ditch. The horses are very powerful. The horses will become unruly if the driver be not strong. If the driver does not know how to manage all these horses, the ego will suffer. On the contrary, if the driver knows the right path and the right way by which he can manage the horses, there will be no suffering, no doubt, and no sorrow. A man, who is dull of understanding and whose mind is unbridled, cannot naturally control the horses or his senses. The ordinary person who is living on the sense plane and is under the influence of

२। आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु ।

बुद्धिन्तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च ॥

इन्द्रियाणि हयानाहुर्विषयास्तेषु गोचरान् ।

आत्मेन्द्रियमनोयुक्तं भोक्तेत्याहुर्मनाधिपः ॥—कठ उपनिषद् १।३।३।४

Cf also Swami Abhedananda *India and Her People*, pp 223-224.

sense powers, cannot control the horses, because the driver is not strong, and he has not proper understanding and adequate self-control, with the result that the horses get the upperhand and drag the driver, willingly or unwillingly, in any direction they desire.

You will find that the vast majority of men have no control over their horses. You will also find many people standing on the sidewalk, looking at the shop windows, attracted by certain things, and immediately they want to possess those things, and go to buy. If they have no money, they will lift those things, and go to jail, and all kinds of troubles will come afterwards. That is the attraction, and the sight of a thing produces such an impression, and the driver did not possess understanding and self-control, and, consequently, they went into the ditch, i.e., went into jail, and suffered terribly. All kinds of robbery, theft, murder, and other crimes are committed by those who have no right understanding and self-control. But if such a person had a little self-control and would have exercised proper reasoning in dissuading him from the mad pursuit of the object of allurements, he could have avoided many troubles and pains. He who has right understanding and whose mind is always firmly held, holds all the horses together. So, if you do not pay any attention to a thing, or if you do not allow yourself to be distracted by it, it does not affect you in the least. That driver holds the reins of the power of attention. And he whose mind is always firmly held, has his senses under control like good horses of a charioteer. The horses obey such a driver. And, you see, just as in ordinary driving, if the horse knows that the driver is not strong, the horse will take his own course. So it is with us in our chariot, the horses of the senses, and when they find the driver is not firm, and the reins are not tight, they go astray, and do whatever they please, and drag the rider also, and bring all kinds of trouble and suffering. Therefore, everyone of us should remember this illustration. It is very helpful, and whenever you are overpowered by some attraction, just remember this illustration. If you can hold the reins of the mind firmly and use the power of discrimination and understanding properly, you will have no trouble, no matter wherever you go in this wide world.

He who has no power of discrimination and is always unmindful and impure, never reaches perfection, but remains in the world of imperfection. Here is another thing to be considered that if we are not mindful of our own self as well as of our own duties and if we are impure in our thoughts and ideas, we cannot attain to perfection. In order to achieve perfection, we must first of all purify our own selves, purify our minds, purify our senses, exercise self-control, and use discrimination. Understand the moral, mental physical and spiritual laws properly, and live up to those laws.

Most people are devoid of discrimination (*vichara* and *viveka*). Discrimination is a thing which they do not know what it is like. If you discriminate between what is right and what is wrong, you can get rid of lots of trouble. Right discrimination is the highest guide in this world. A man who lacks discrimination, lives quite naturally in the darkness of ignorance, and suffers consequently endless pains and miseries in life.

If you walk on the street on a cold morning and do not know where there is ice, and if you just look up at the clouds or shut your eyes and step over stone or rock or slippery ground, you are bound to fall and suffer, and break your neck. You will have to exercise the power of attention and discrimination. Of these two things you must not be unmindful in your works, in your daily life and in your duties, and at the same time you must use discrimination and pure thoughts, and then pure ideas must be held as pure friends. Impure thoughts and impure ideas will lead us into misery. Impure thoughts are never helpful, and, in order to purify our minds and inner nature, we must cherish holy thoughts in our mind. Everything that is uplifting, everything that is beneficial to mankind, everything that makes us unselfish, everything that makes us forget ourselves, and everything that helps us in cultivating conscious self-denial, are the ideals of life. Every time we deny ourselves, we grow richer. The more we give, the more we receive. This one thing we must learn that every time we deny ourselves we want certain things, and if we find we can get along without that thing and give that energy or that thing to some other person, whose need is greater than ours, that is denying ourselves. Instead of trying to grab everything from

everybody else, instead of having that feeling of possession, cheating and robbing others of their legitimate dues and instead of holding such impure thoughts, we must hold thoughts of truthfulness that we should never cheat anybody. No matter how often we may be cheated or robbed we should never cheat others. Make that firm resolution that you shall never do any wrong to anybody, no matter how you may be injured or hurt or robbed, and that would be your principle under all conditions. If you starve, you should not sacrifice your principle, but rather sacrifice your body than your principle. That kind of firmness is necessary. If you teach your children such ideas, when they grow up, they will be Christlike. On the contrary, if you teach them how to cheat and rob, they will be murderers in the end, they will be criminals, and they will fill the state asylums and the state prisons. Why do we have so many murderers in this country? Because they are not trained from their childhood in this way to deny themselves, but they follow the vulgar ideals which ask them to flourish materially at the other man's expense by means, fair or foul. Do you not see how mean is the idea of those robbers? How shrewd are these businessmen who rob others, and how shrewd their idea is. They are very keen, and at the same time they are extremely mischievous and wicked. They have directed their keen ideas in that wrong channel of injuring others and enriching themselves, but if they turned those ideas towards helping others and denying themselves, they would be godly. There would be no need of police, and there would be no need of state laws, if the individuals lived in this way, and if they trained their children, they trained also others to live in the same way.

He who has right knowledge and self-control and is pure, reaches perfection and the lasting bliss. Now you see that these are the conditions of reaching perfection. First of all we must have right knowledge, right discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal, the spirit and the matter, the soul and the body, and the right and wrong. All these things we must know *as they are in reality*. If we have that knowledge and can distinguish the soul from the body, the spirit from the matter, the right from the wrong, then, with the help of that knowledge we can attain to perfection. At the same time we must

have self-control, hold the reins of the sense in check and we must not allow the horses to drag us into the ditch of despair, sorrow, suffering, and misery. So exercise self-control at every moment of your life. If any passion arises, deny it instead of encouraging it. Deny all the passions, and say: "I have no passion; I am the highest". Every time anything attracts you, deny it. Try self-denial, and you will find that you have risen above the level of ordinary mortals. What can be more practical than this? We can practise this at all time. When we are alone or when we are with our friends and relatives, we can practise self-denial, and we shall find that everybody will appreciate it in the end. Those who deny themselves in social life, are always respected and honoured.

The greatest philanthropists are those who denied themselves. That is the sure way to prosperity, godliness, righteousness, and spirituality; and in the end, with the help of that self-control and right knowledge we shall be able to reach perfection. Then we shall know what is meant by perfection. We cherish at present queer ideas about it. We think that perfection means a kind of heaven, where we get all kinds of enjoyment without suffering and misery. That is the idea which the ordinary people cherish, but that is a wrong conception. Heavenly bliss is not equivalent to the state of perfection. Very few people know what is meant by perfection. In fact, perfection means a state in which all your senses and passions are under control and you are the absolute master of your own self. Perfection does not mean a realm, but a state of existence, a level of enlarged consciousness where we come in tune with the Infinite. Christ had attained to that state, and, therefore, he was perfect. Omniscience will mark that stage. In the state of perfection, your past, present, and future will be equally revealed to you in their fullness. Everything will then be open to you. You will then understand all the laws, gross or subtle, that govern physical, mental and spiritual planes. You will then understand your true nature and its relation to the infinite Being. All vital questions like the nature of the infinite Being, its source and history, the root of all phenomena will be solved at that stage.¹ We are capable of that great achievement. That

¹ The *Upanishad* has said about it: *bhidyate hridaya-granthih sccidyanie sarva-samsayah*, etc.

should be our ideal, and not merely eating, drinking and making money. Three conditions are essential for achieving the highest end in life. These are self-control, self-denial, and right knowledge. Any man who possesses these three, will attain to the highest goal of all religions. Whether you believe in God or not, you will attain to God, which signifies perfection. Belief in God is not necessary for salvation, as belief is an accompaniment of the right knowledge. In fact, knowledge and belief spring simultaneously. Blind faith does not help us in any way. Only that belief is helpful which is fed and kindled by right knowledge and discrimination. That faith once acquired, is unshakable, and it cannot be changed, it is indestructible.

CHAPTER VIII

EGO, SELF AND SENSATION

The most important thing in the study of Vedanta philosophy is to know the real nature of the self, which is known as the individual ego (*jivatman*). When we have known our true selves, we have known everything. This may sound very curious that by knowing ourselves, we know everything. Perhaps you remember that most ancient saying: "What is the highest wisdom? Know Thyself". The knowledge of our true self is the highest wisdom. Why is it the highest? Because by knowing one's self, one can realize the true nature of the universe, the true nature of God, and also the true nature of everything.

For the Western people it is the most difficult thing to understand. Those who are brought up with the dualistic idea that God and individual souls and the world are separate entities, cannot grasp this point at all. They generally think that by knowing one's own individual self, one can get only a partial knowledge of the universe, because the individual self is distinct and separate from the external universe and also from God. This idea is very prominent amongst the dualistic religions. In Christianity and Judaism, you will find this idea very prominent that God is separate from the universe, that we are separate from God and also from the universe. There is a wide gulf of separation between man and God in Christianity and Judaism, and the gulf is bridged over by the conception of the Son of God which is known as the Logos in Christianity.

But, in studying Vedanta, we go beyond this conception. Vedanta helps us to go beyond that conception that we are separate from God, and that God is distinct and separate from the universe. In Vedanta, we find a deeper, more helpful and more uplifting conception that God is not very far from us, and that the Reality of the universe is not entirely separate from us, but dwelling within us. We learn from Vedanta that He is the foundation of our individual existence.

Upon this conception is based the whole philosophy and

religion of Vedanta. There the students of Vedanta have a greater advantage. They do not have to go through so many theories, doctrines, and dogmas in order to solve the problems which disturb the minds of men. They can easily solve all these problems by that central idea that God dwells in the universe as well as in all of us. He is not very far away from us, but nearest to our being. He is the very essence of our existence, and He is our true Self.

Having understood the point that God pervades the universe and us all, and that He is the Soul of our souls, the Life of our life, if we start in our search after God within us, we will find 'Know Thyself' is the answer to that question. When we use such expressions as 'Know Thyself', we do not mean merely the physical self, or merely the external personality, or the human self, but we mean something different and deeper than that. Our human self is only the externalized manifestation of a higher Self, which is called in Sanskrit the *Atman*. It is distinguishable from the human self or Anglo-Saxon self, which grows and moves, and thinks. But, in fact, there is something behind the thinker. Ordinarily, we cannot go beyond our thoughts, and beyond the conception of a thinker. But suppose that you come to a moment when you do not think, and when your thoughts do not disturb you, what happens to you then? All thoughts are quiet, all passions are silenced, and all desires are latent, what happens then? Have you ever asked that question? That is the time when you go beyond thoughts, but still you do not lose your existence. You exist as an entity full of calmness, repose, and consciousness. But very few people, who are living a busy life and constantly rushing from one thing to another, can grasp this idea, and can understand what happens at that time, when thoughts, passions or desires do not disturb us. That is the point, where we can find our true Self, if we turn the light of knowledge, just like a searchlight, towards our Self or the higher Self. Then we can learn what our true Self is and what God is like.

You may search for God outside in the external world. Go to Palestine, go to the mountains, go to the holy places or to sacred temples, but you will not find God anywhere. If you have not found Him within yourself, if you have not known what you are in reality and what your true Self is, you cannot

discover and in the same time realize God. The Vedanta philosophy imparts to mankind that supreme knowledge, and the whole world is deeply in debt to it. In India alone, you will find such teachers who can teach the means to that divine knowledge. Because India has always stood for this knowledge, and that is the one point or one thought which is a special object of study for all nations, and which India has always taught. It is India which has always been the teacher of other nations in this spiritual line.

By knowing our Self, we know God, and by knowing our Self, we know the external world too. But how do we know the external world? You may think that modern science helps us in studying the external world. How far will science take you in your studies? How far will science help you in knowing the external world? Not beyond sense perceptions. The moment you try to get beyond sense perceptions, you transcend the realm of science. Conversely, if you cannot transcend that realm, you cannot go beyond the empirical knowledge. Science will give some theories and hypothesis. And how do you know those theories are true? You know these theories by inference. Then you come to the psychological stage through external science like physics, chemistry, etc. There is the beginning of the psychological stage. Psychological science will lead us beyond the science of the external world, and in trying to know our Self, we must learn to analyse our perceptions. The analysis of our sense perceptions and of our mental conditions and of our states of consciousness will help us in entering into our innermost Being and realizing our true Self as well as Divinity which is dwelling within us.

In order to analyse our self (*jivatman*), we will have to start with our sense objects and the gross material body. We possess five senses of perception and knowledge of the senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching. These five senses are the doors through which our individual egos come in contact with the external world. Now, how are you going to analyse these perceptions? Here we need the study of physiology as well as psychology. In trying to analyse our perceptions, we will first start with the external objects of sense. The senses are the gates through which we receive the vibrations of the external objects. Now we see different colours of objects.

But what happens when we see a colour ? There comes certain vibrations of ether in contact with our eye-balls, and through the eye-balls they are focussed, and they produce an inverted image on the retina. We are not conscious of that inverted image, but that inverted image of a thing, whether of a chair or table, produces a certain change and vibration in the optic nerves. That vibration is carried into the brain cells. The molecular changes take place in those cells, and that vibration again of the brain-cell is translated by the ego, or the mind, or by an intelligent something, into sensations. If they are not translated into sensations by a conscious entity, they would remain only as vibrations, and not become sensations. Then those sensations will be made into *percepts*, and another mental process will go on, and that will convert or transform those *percepts* into *concepts*. Now this thing is constantly going on. First we receive vibrations from external objects, and then those vibrations are changed into sensations, and these sensations produce *percepts*, and *percepts* are again turned into *concepts*.

Now, if you close your eyes and think of a chair, you make a mental picture of that chair. That is a *concept*. You have the form or *concept* of a chair, and whenever you see anything like a chair, you compare it with that *concept* in your mind which is pigeonholed, and then if you find that it is similar to your *concept* you call it a chair. If it be dissimilar, you call it by some other name. And this is what we are doing all the time.

You hear a sound. But sound is nothing but vibrations of air that enters through our ears, and touches the organ of hearing, and that produces a vibration in the auditory nerves, and that molecular vibration is carried to the brain cells, and produces another kind of molecular change. That again produces a *percept*, and this *percept* is transformed or converted into a *concept* by an intelligent mind.

If the intelligent mind does not exist, these vibrations may enter into the organs, but will produce no sensation, just as in a dead body the organs may remain perfect, and vibrations of air or of ether may touch the organs, and may produce certain molecular changes in the brain cells, but they will not produce sensations. This kind of analysis is necessary to under-

stand our true Self. And when we are aware of this deep point and try to trace the cause of a sensation, we feel that this object has produced that sensation, and, therefore, we call that object the cause of our sensation, or the cause of our perception. That is another mental process, and the mind tries to trace the cause. It is not the sense organs that try to trace the cause of a sensation, but it is the intelligent mind that tries to trace the cause. Then we project our concept outside ourselves, and think that something has produced this sensation, and, therefore, we say that chair is like a chair. But we have never seen a chair. We cannot see the external chair, and we can only become conscious of that sensation. The molecular action which is transformed into sensation, is all we can be conscious of.

Now comes the question: which is higher, and which is finer? Here the Ruler of Death explains the process of analysis. In studying Vedanta, you require at every step critical analysis as well as creative synthesis, for Vedanta is not merely a science of the self, but is also its philosophy. Then you will be able to grasp everything. With reference to this, Vedanta says: "Finer than the sense organs are the sensations. The mind is beyond sensations. Beyond the mind is the intellect. Greater than the intellect is the cosmic ego. Beyond the cosmic ego is the unmanifested one, and beyond the unmanifested one is the highest Spirit, and beyond which there can be nothing greater or higher. This is the goal; this is the highest path which reaches to perfection".¹

I have just explained to you that the sense organs are the grossest instruments through which we see the vibrations, and those vibrations are changed into sensations. Therefore sensations are something which are finer than the gross sense organs. The objects of sense in the external world are grosser than our sense organs. That which determines, is higher than that which is determined. The sound or colour cannot be higher than the sense of hearing or sense of seeing, which reveals and

१। इन्द्रियेभ्यः परा ह्यर्था अर्थेभ्यश्च परं मनः ।

मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्बुद्धेरात्मा महान् परः ॥

महतः परमन्यक्तात् अव्यक्तात् पुरुषः परः ।

पुरुषाच्च परं किञ्चित् सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः ॥—कठ उपनिषद्, ३।११

enlightens the sound and colour, because a determinant is necessarily higher than the object to be determined. By the sense powers we know the object of senses, and, therefore, the sense powers are higher than the objects of senses ; because the sense powers or sense organs are grosser than sensations, or it can be said that sensations are much finer than these gross instruments.

Finer than sensations is the mind. Now what does the mind mean ? The mind means here attention, or the power of attention. If your ego is inattentive, when a sensation is produced, you cannot be aware of that sensation. You are just now sitting here and listening to me. Send your mind to your home, and you will not hear what I am saying, and even you will not understand anything about it. If you are inattentive just for a second, you will miss certain words. Those vibrations of air (words are nothing but vibrations of air) will enter into your ears, and will produce changes in the auditory nerves as well as molecular changes in the brain cells. The vibrations will be changed into sensations, but you will not be conscious of them because you are not attentive. Therefore attention reveals sensation, and, therefore, it is higher. That is, the power of attention is higher than sensation. The very fact of becoming conscious of a sensation means or presupposes the support of close attention. Without attention you cannot perceive any object or any sensation. Even the power of attention is not enough. You will have to determine whether a sensation is of heat, or of cold, or of light, or of pain or pleasure. Who will do that ? The power of attention is incapable of it. We require still another faculty, which is called the power of determination. That is called in Sanskrit *buddhi*.

After receiving a sensation we abstract the sensation, and when it is abstracted, it is called *percept*. When it is still more abstracted and made a picture of, it is called a *concept*. Now, who does make that *concept* ? It is the power of determination. You hear a sound. Whether it is the sound of a bugle, or of a steam engine, or of a drum—who is going to distinguish this ? For this the power of attention would not be enough. The moment we hear a sound, the mind works, the intellect works, and all those concepts of sound which we have in our mind, are pigeonholed. The power of intellect brings them out

through the power of memory, and compares this sound with the concepts of other sounds that we have heard, and then it says: 'no, this sound seems to be like the sound of an engine, or a musical note.' This sound seems to be like that of a drum'. If you are sitting in your own room and are listening to some kind of noise in the street, how do you determine what kind of noise it is. You will determine it by referring back to the former concepts of sensations which you have in your mind. And who does that? It is the intellect, or the determinative faculty, which determines by comparing; and by right comparison, when it determines properly, you know that it is such and such a sound.

This psychological process or analysis is done very quickly. It can be done in 1/1000th of a second, or in 1/1,000,000th of a second. The mind is very quick, and these concepts which are created by the power of the determinative faculty, are kept in the mind. Then there comes another sense which is still higher than the determinative faculty. That is the sense of *I*, *me*, and *mine*. That is the ego, and that sense of *I* is absolutely necessary, otherwise, these sensations may come and go. But they would not affect the individual ego, unless there be a connection between the sensation and the one who experiences or feels the sensation. There may be sensations at every moment of our life. At every moment we are having sensations of some kind or other, but who is there to bind them together, and to put a tie between the subject or the perceiver and the sensations or the perceptions? It is the ego, the sense of '*I*' or *I*-consciousness. The moment we hear sound, we say that it is my sensation, and, therefore, this sense of '*I*' binds all sensations, perceptions, concepts, and feelings. Feelings of pleasure or pain is higher than that of the faculties which are just described. There may be a pain in your body, but if you have no sense that this pain is yours, it would be like the pain of somebody else. You would have nothing to do with it. You would not suffer from it. If you can cut off this connection between a sensation of pain for instance and the perceiver, then you have no feeling of pain. That would be the true meaning of a Christian Scientist that there is no such thing as pain, because you have cut off your connection by denying yourself. But the Christian Scientists of today do not do that. They do not

understand psychology, and that is the capital defect in their study. But, in India, you will find their historical prototypes only with superior knowledge and larger vision. They are called the Vedantists, and they have learnt from Vedanta that they can avoid pain by cutting off their connection with their body. Your finger or toe may ache, and if you cut off your sensation from yourself, you do not feel it. If you can think of yourself as something different or separate from the body, or fix your attention on something different, you do not at all feel the pain. If we can cut off all connections with various sensations that we are receiving through our sense organs, the external world will vanish, and it will not exist in relation to us. Now what is the cause of it? Because the external world exists so long as there is connection between the external world and our sense of 'I' through the medium of sensations, and this sense of 'I' makes us individual entities, or it can be said that it makes up our personalities which we call 'ego'.

Each individual ego is an individual centre which calls itself 'I'. Anything related to that centre is *mine*, and anything referring to the centre is *me* or *mine*. This thought rises in the ego, and we cannot think of anything apart from the sense of 'I' which is the centre of our individual existence. That is the reason why we do not take any interest in anything which is not related to I-consciousness or the sense of *I*, *me* or *mine*. This is true of all men and women, nay, of all beings.

The self-study, in this light, means we have studied all individual human beings. Everyone is doing the same thing. If you know your own ego, you have known the ego of others, whether human or non-human, because in all living creatures, there is an ego or the sensation of 'I'. Take the case of a dog, for instance, it knows what its earthly existence is. Either directly or indirectly it is conscious of itself, and it feels pleasure or pain. It suffers and enjoys, and that is done by the individual ego of the dog. Wherever there is any expression of consciousness, or intelligence, there is this sense of 'I'. Even in the vegetable kingdom, there is a slight manifestation of the sense of 'I', and, therefore, the great thinkers of the world have called the sense of 'I' in vegetable the vegetable souls. The vegetables have souls—souls not of the same degree of manifestation, as that of the human souls. The difference is only

in degree They have less manifestation than that in lower animals, and than in a minute animalcule which moves. It is within the very grossest or lowest kind of consciousness or the sense of 'I'. It is very faint, more like the consciousness in a dream state, or perhaps we may call it a subconscious sense of 'I'.

Here we find our relation with the universe in which we live. Having understood our own individual ego, and having also realized that all individual egos are of similar nature, and they all mean the centre of *I*, *we* and *mine*, we begin to trace our relation to this universe. How can you do it? Take all the individual egos of this world from the highest human being to the lowest vegetables, and take them in their totality collectively. This individual sense of 'I', when taken collectively, will be composed of millions and millions of the sense of 'I'. That would be the cosmic ego. That cosmic ego is higher than our individual egos, because each individual sense of 'I' means a portion of this collective sense of 'I'. If you can close your eyes and withdraw your mind from the external world and think of this one sense of 'I', manifesting through countless individual entities, some of which are human, while some others are animal and vegetable. How big that idea will be. It will be like one universal whole, of which we are but parts. Each individual sense of 'I' will be then a part of this cosmic 'I' or cosmic ego.

Now what is this cosmic ego? You see how from an individual we are going to the universal. By studying the individual self, we are studying everybody Unless you know yourself, you cannot know the self of others. When I lift my hand or move it, how do you know it? Because you do the same by referring to your own self When anybody feels pain and you sympathize with that person, how do you sympathize? You sympathize by putting yourself into that person's condition. That is all you do. If you were hurt in that way, you would suffer pain. If anybody is crying or suffering, how do you know? If you put yourself in their thoughts and conditions, you would do the same. Of course, you cannot act it in the same way, because you are not conscious of the psychological process. But even unconsciously or subconsciously you put yourself in their thoughts and conditions, or remember

something of a shocking nature which happened to yourself, and that is the way you sympathize with another person and try to relieve that pain, and otherwise you would not do so. Thus if you analyse that feeling, you will find that you can only sympathize with, or do anything for another, by being conscious of what is going on in the mind of another only by referring to your own sensation or perceptions or feelings which you have in yourself. There is no other way of knowing it. Now, how do you know that other people have souls ? Because you yourself have a soul. How do you know that dogs have senses ? Because you yourself have that kind of senses, or you would do the same thing, or express yourself in a similar way under those conditions. And if we take these isolated individuals collectively, it means we have taken the whole universe. There may be beings in the distant planets and the stars, and if there be a being of any kind, that being also must have a sense of 'I', otherwise it would not be a being. And wherever there is sense of 'I', that sense of 'I' must be of that nature. So we have taken the whole universe, and have found our relation with the intelligent universe, and not with the dead matter. Dead matter is the grossest thing. We started with the object of the senses, but we have come to the realm of consciousness now. The sense of 'I' or the ego, that which says ; 'I am here', 'I am sitting here', 'I am talking', or 'I am listening', or 'I walk', 'I go home', 'I do this', 'I have these duties', and so on, and which is the thinker, doer and perceiver, cannot exist, if there be no sense of 'I'.

There are different personalities. Some persons manifest a certain personality, and that personality may be cut off. The relation of that personality may be cut off from other personalities, but still each personality has the sense of 'I', connected with it. There may be twenty different personalities in one human being, but there cannot be twenty different souls in him. There is only one soul or ego, which expresses or puts on a different garment of thought-form, and that makes a different separate personality. But the connection is not cut off from the individual ego. This sense of 'I' unites all sensations, and is the cause of individual identity. For instance, how do you know that you are the same person that you were yesterday ? How do you know it ? The sense of identity is caused by the ego. The sensations and perceptions which you had in the

morning, are pigeon-holed in your mind in the form of concepts and percepts. The sensations are gone, leaving the impressions (*samskaras*) upon your mind substance. And who connects these impressions of various kinds? Who has combined them together if there be no one intelligent entity above all? The sensations cannot be our individual ego. They simply leave impressions on the mind substance, and it is the individual ego who reads them, translates them, combines them, mixes them, and produces that close relation, which is at the foundation of our sense of identity.

Now we have come so far to the sense of 'I'. Here comes a difficult problem again. We will have to analyse this sense of 'I', and proceed further. That is not the end of all. We are going to the ultimate Reality of the universe. The ego would be now the starting-point of our venture. It has nothing to do with the body, though at present the sense of 'I' is deeply related to it. When you think of yourself, either as a man or a woman, either young or old, it is simply because of the sense of 'I' which you possess. But put that aside. Think of yourself as an entity (*satta*). Of course, your body is connected with other different relations, and whatever relations may interfere with your sense of 'I' at present, they will be always meaningful only in relation to the body or blood relations, or some other kind of relation. This sense of 'I' is not the ultimate Reality of the universe, but it is the manifestation, and it is the starting-point or beginning of differentiation. The sense of 'I' also produces the sense of 'not-I', or, in other words, the sense of the ego produces the sense of non-ego. That is the first differentiation of the spirit and the matter. When the cosmic ego, which is the one universal 'I', became conscious of itself, there was the other side of it, which was 'not-I' or the non-ego. If you think 'I am this', it also means that 'I am not that', similarly, 'I am this body', means 'I am not this chair'. The very sense of 'I' includes the sense of what 'I' am not, which is non-ego. Now, this is the first differentiation. When the cosmic ego became conscious of itself, that was the beginning of the existence of matter-differentiation. This sense of 'I' or the ego is a blending of two factors. The one is a changeable thing, and the other is unchangeable. The changeable part is that which is progressing, and which is subject to evolution. For

instance, I am a child, then I am a young boy or a young girl, then I am a youth, then I am mature, I am a thinker, I am a doer, I am walking. Now here you will notice that in all these qualifications of this sense of 'I', there is a double quantity. Thinker is not the same as doer, and doer is not the same as perceiver. But there is another part which is not changing. I am this, I am that, I am sitting, I am walking, I am reading. That something which is unchangeable, is a constant quantity. Now, therefore, it is a mixture of changeable and unchangeable somethings. What is this changeable something? This changeable something is the foundation of the phenomenal universe of the body, of the sense organs, and of external objects, etc. It is called in modern science the 'energy'. It is the source of evolution. The universe has come out into its present state by the process of evolutionary energy. What is meant by energy? Energy means forces in their latent state. All the external world is nothing but the manifestation of force, and when that force does not exercise its power in any form, but remains dormant, it is called 'energy'.

Such was the beginning of the universe. All matter is nothing but a certain state of force i.e. force of attraction, or repulsion, or an electrical force. Even the minute particles of the atoms are nothing but the force-centres. And all these are the manifestations of one eternal energy. Modern science has gone so far. If you read Herbert Spencer's books, you will find that this energy is the beginning of the universe and this energy is indestructible eternal and one.

Now you will understand how one energy produces all kinds of forces like heat, light, motion, gravitation, electricity, and such other things. All these are produced from one kind of energy, and that energy again is called by different names, according to the manifestations. That energy is called in Vedanta *Avyakta*, the unmanifested or undifferentiated consciousness which modern science calls unknown and unknowable, or the undifferentiated state of the phenomenal universe.

The body and the sense organs, therefore, have come out of energy, live through it, and ultimately go back to it. That energy is subject to evolution, and that energy is behind our intellect or determinative faculty. It has produced intellect, mind, and sense powers, because intellect, mind, and thinking

power are nothing but the expression of energy or the parts of this cosmic energy. So the cosmic ego means cosmic energy plus something. There is no intelligence in energy. Knowing this, the point which cannot be determined by any other science except metaphysics, how can we distinguish this intelligence from energy? How do you know there is such a thing as energy? You can distinguish or determine it by your intelligence. If you were not conscious of energy, the energy would not exist in relation to you. Therefore energy means a state of consciousness. Take, for instance, coal. Coal possesses an energy. How do you know it? If you burn it, it will produce fire, it will create force and, therefore, it is in the energy-state of force. You can understand that force is a form of energy only, when your state of consciousness takes that form. Therefore energy is only one state of consciousness, while matter is another. These are the various states of consciousness. We cannot go beyond consciousness to know anything of the external world. All these sensations are the states of consciousness, or the changes in consciousness. You have a feeling of heat, that is, your state of consciousness is that there is heat. When you have a feeling of cold, that is another state of consciousness. If you are not conscious of it, it does not exist in relation to you. If it does not produce any change in your conscious state, it does not exist. The moment it affects your state of consciousness, you shiver. Then you feel that it is cold, or it is very warm. That means your sensation of cold or heat is a state of consciousness. You can know energy or force only in relation to your consciousness in some form or other.

Therefore, in our consciousness, we find that this double quantity is produced by what is subject to change and evolution, that is, energy. And there is another portion. The intelligent portion is not a part of energy. Energy itself is not conscious of itself as energy, but it is something distinct and separate from energy, what knows that this is energy and this is not and what is beyond that undifferentiated energy. It is called the *Purusha*, which means the principal Self, that is, the subject and the source of our consciousness. Consciousness is not produced by energy, but when the source of consciousness and energy come together, they produce the ego.

Therefore, the ego has two attributes: the changeable

quality which comes out of the energy, while the unchangeable proceeds from the true Self or the Reality of the universe. The Reality is the basis of the universe. You cannot go beyond it, for it is the background of God which is nothing but the cosmic ego. The cosmic ego and God are convertible terms. The personal God, whom we worship, is the cosmic ego, who sees through all eyes, and hears through all ears. He is conscious of the whole Self i.e. conscious of us all. Just as we are conscious of our little world, so God is conscious of the whole universe. As we govern and regulate our individual existence, so the cosmic existence is regulated and directed by the cosmic ego whom we worship as a personal God. Now, in studying yourself, you come in touch with the personal God, through the personal with the impersonal, which is called by different names.

What is the difference between the Over-soul and soul (*Jivatman* and *Paramatman*)? The soul is the ego, and the Over-soul is the source of consciousness, or the Absolute. It is not the same as energy, but it is the knower of energy. It is the source of consciousness and bliss. It is called in Vedanta Brahman. Brahman is the goal of the universe, as also its foundation. Therefore it is said in the Vedas: "That from which the whole phenomenal universe has come into existence, in which it exists and into which it returns at the time of dissolution, know that as the Reality, that is your true Self."¹ When you have known that, all else will be revealed to your vision. Then you have understood the meaning of 'Know Thyself' (*आत्मानं विद्धि*). Then you have understood how by knowing yourself, you will know God and the universe. What will be the effect of that knowledge? That knowledge will make you omniscient immediately. The little consciousness or knowledge you receive through the senses, would appear as ignorance or darkness. This knowledge is not enough. As long as we do not know our own self, we cannot know the essence of anything. Book-reading will not be of much use in that

१। यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते, येन जातानि जीवन्ति

यत् प्रयन्यमिसम्बिभन्ति तद्विजिज्ञासस्व तद् इति ॥—तैत्तिरीय उपनिषद्

CHAPTER IX

THE DIVINE ELEMENT IN US

It has been already stated that the rider in the chariot of the body is our true self, the *Atman*, as it is called in Sanskrit. It is very subtle, and, so it is also very difficult to grasp its true nature. It is again subtler than the subtlest and finer than the finest. If we try to realize it, we will have to transcend the mental conditions and intellectual limitations. Starting from the gross physical body, we will have to go to the sense powers, then to sensations, then from sensations to percepts, and then, again, to concepts. Then we come to the intellectual plane. In fact, from the physical plane we gradually rise to the plane of this senses, then to the plane of sensation, next to the psychic mental plane. Among them we will find that some are lower than others.

If we study very closely our mental condition, we will find that the faculty of determination is stronger and is finer than the power of attention. The ego or the sense of I-consciousness is again finer than the faculty of determination. Now, the ego is one who combines all these different sensations, percepts and concepts, and identifies and classifies them, and makes our whole being one continuous whole. And that is the ego.

We have also seen that this ego is a reflection or image (*pratibimba*) of something which is higher and still finer than the ego. Ordinary minds cannot go beyond this ego. The ego or the sense of *I, me* or *mine* is the limit. We cannot ordinarily think of anything beyond it. Our conception at its best goes up to this ego or I-consciousness which means such terms as *I, me* or *mine*. But anything that is beyond that limit, is not grasped by ordinary minds. The materialistic thinkers deny the existence of anything beyond this ego. The religionists try to know its nature through ceremonies, rituals, doctrines and dogmas and faith. But in philosophy like Vedanta, you will find that the whole truth of religion is based upon what is beyond the

ego. That part which is beyond the ego, is divine and immortal. We cannot know it by ordinary means, or in the usual sense of the term.

The ego is again subject to change like growth and decay, and subject to various kinds of evolution. But the divine self within us is beyond change and evolution. The changes of the physical body, the sense powers and the mind do not affect what is beyond the ego. Because ego is the image of the divine part, the *Atman*. We hear the expression that God dwells within us, and then we ask: "How can God dwell within us? Why does He dwell within us?" These questions cannot be answered by those who believe in a personal God as dwelling outside of the universe, with a human form and human attributes. They will find it extremely difficult to understand how a personal God can dwell within human beings in a human form. And, consequently, those who believe in a personal God with a human form and human attributes, think God as sitting on a throne, outside of the universe, and issues commands. God, they believe, is far away from them and not within.

But when we think of the higher conception of God, that is, God as the all-pervading Spirit, dwelling everywhere and interpenetrating every atom, then and then only we can understand how God dwells within us. He has His personal aspect for those who believe in His personal aspect. But He has other aspects too. He is impersonally personal, as He has no particular form; but yet He can take any form to satisfy the desires and prayers of the devotees. God is the soul of the universe, just as our soul is impersonally personal. The soul has no particular form in us. If it has any form, we can see or perceive it with our senses. But we cannot. That shows that it has no material form. Similarly, God, being the soul of the universe or the universal soul, has no particular form, but yet He assumes diverse forms. In truth, He is formless. But again He assumes the form, and His gross form or physical body is the whole phenomenal universe. He has infinite eyes, infinite ears, infinite limbs, and infinite senses. He sees through all eyes; He hears through all ears; He thinks through all brains and minds. In fact, our minds are parts of the cosmic mind, just as our intellects are the parts of the cosmic intellect. As God is

the Lord of the universe, He is the soul of our souls as well as the Soul of the ego.

If we can understand this point and grasp this conception of God, we shall be able to know how God dwells within us, and what relation there is between the ego and the divine Being. The ego is subject to change, but the divine spark within us is not subject to change. It is always the same. But the ego goes through various kinds of evolution. The ego is described as one enjoying the fruits of actions, thoughts and deeds. It is the ego who enjoys all the pleasures as well as suffers all pains. But what is behind the ego, is the rider in the chariot of the body, and he is above the categories of pleasure and pain. He does not enjoy, nor does he suffer from any change, physical or mental. It is the ego who enjoys or suffers, but what is beyond it, stands unaffected by mental changes. It is the highest and subtlest thing in the universe. It is higher than the mind and the intellect. It is higher than the ego also, because the ego owes its existence to the *Atman* or the Divine principle in us. In fact, the ego is the reflection or image of the *Atman*, the true Self. It is immortal and eternal. It is deathless, but all other things are subject to death.

Now, what do we mean by death? Death means the change or evolution. Evolution means the change through death of the previous old condition, and the birth of a new condition. And that is one of the meanings of evolution. When the condition is transformed from one state into another, that is called evolution. Death connotes the same idea. The old conception of death that frightened the ignorant minds, was that death was a state, in which everything was destroyed, and, therefore, the idea of resurrection according to Christianity was necessary at that time, because among the Christians the thought of immortality was unknown. They did not know that the soul was immortal, and, consequently, the fear of death was so strong that they needed something to counteract that feeling of fear; and out of that fear, sprang the theory of resurrection of the spirit after death. This theory first originated in Persia. But, in India, the idea of resurrection in that peculiar sense was not necessary, because the soul or the true Self of man was considered to be immortal from the beginning. The Hindu conception was deeper than that of any other

nation. The Hindu minds grasped the divine spark within the ego. You will find this idea in no other religion so strongly as it is in Vedanta.

If you go to India, there you won't have to ask the question whether the soul is immortal or not.¹ Every child knows and believes it. There is no question about it, and, consequently, they do not try to prove the immortality of the soul. The existence of an immortal substance in man is their first postulate in thinking. Those who have doubts regarding it, need proof, and doubts proceed from ignorance. Scepticism grows out of ignorance. Knowledge dispels the sense of doubt or scepticism. Knowledge is comparable to light. As light dispels the darkness, so the light of knowledge removes the veil of ignorance, and consequently, raise a man above doubt or scepticism. Therefore, so long as we doubt our immortal nature, so long as we grope in the darkness of ignorance, we do not know anything about our true Self. The immortal part within us is the *Atman*. That is the *Purusha*, the real Self, of which the ego is but an image or reflection.

Now you will understand through Vedanta what is meant by the passage: "God created man in his own image". Ordinarily you think of God in human terms. And when it is said that man is the image of God, you take it too literally only to be misled. While the point of analogy is metaphysical, you take it only in its physical sense. The real meaning is very deep and profound. It is the relation of the ego to the divine spark, or the divine spirit is all pervading. How can that formless divine Being be the image of a human being? That question has troubled the minds of the theologians for two thousand years, and they have not as yet come to any satisfying conclusion. Ask a minister of a Church what is the true meaning of the passage: "God created man in his own image", and he will perhaps confess his ignorance about it. In order to grasp this point, an aspirant must go to metaphysics or philosophy, brushing aside all wrongly drawn theological conclusions, doctrines and dogmas. But the students of Vedanta can understand this point very easily, because their approach to it is from the very beginning spiritual and metaphysical.

¹ It should be remembered that Swami Abhedananda delivered this lecture among the American people.

And, therefore, when we read this passage we know that the true Self is the highest ; it is the greatest of all things in the universe.

You may ask: "How do you know that there is nothing greater than that ?" Because even our highest thoughts cannot reveal it. On the contrary, they are revealed and animated by it. It is above all mental conditions. Anything that is within the mental conditions, or anything that can be grasped by the mind or intellect, is not the highest. If we could grasp the *Atman* by the intellect, or if we could grasp the divine Being by our thoughts, God would then cease to be limitless. A limited God which functions within the limits of our intellect or mind, cannot be the highest object of worship. On the contrary, our mind would then occupy a higher status than God, because the determining force is greater than the object to be determined. If God is knowable by the mind, he is no longer God. Such God is personal, and is a creation of man's mind. But God as conceived in Vedanta is unlimited and infinite. He is the source of all intelligence and consciousness. He is beyond the mental plane.

The divine element in us is the deepest essence of our being. Mind and intellect have no access to it. God, the Brahman, is above mind and beyond thoughts. We will have to go beyond thoughts. That is a very difficult problem. How can we go beyond thoughts, and what will then remain is the Absolute alone, and it is one without the second. We shall reach that state when we have gone beyond all sensations, percepts, concepts, mental conditions and ideas, and impressions and thoughts. Then only the divine spark will be revealed to us. We will see it not by intellectual light, but by divine light. Then we will understand what is meant by that state which is described by Christ or Buddha—the state of enlightenment, divine communion, the transfiguration of the divine ego into the *Atman*.

This divine spark or principle is all-pervading. It dwells in all living creatures. In fact, it animates everything from the minutest particle to the largest solar system. In man, however, the manifestation of Divinity is more vivid and perceptible than in the plants or the lower animals. Man is the highest experiment of the evolutionary process. It has the finest organism,

nervous system, brain etc., and the human being alone is capable of grasping the truth that God resides in all, or that the ego is the image of God. No other animal can grasp this point. Other animals, in order to gain this knowledge, must evolve to the human plane. Therefore, the human form is uptill now the highest product on this plane of existence. It is even higher than the angelic plane and the plane of the *devas* or bright spirits, because here we have the advantage, that we can become angels or bright spirits, we can reach the state of the absolute Truth from the human plane, transcending all other minor planes in other realms. But if the *devas* or bright spirits wish to go beyond their realm, they will have to be born as human beings. They cannot attain to that state directly and immediately, but they have to go through many intermediate states and conditions of evolution before they can reach the Absolute. Therefore it is said that the human plane is better and more advantageous than the *devic* or the angelic planes. The human being by his thoughts and deeds can become an angel, but angels cannot reach the Absolute state right away. Angels have their limitations. They are not as yet perfect. They are not yet free from evolution. They will have to evolve to the human plane for catching a glimpse of the Divinity. The human souls alone are capable of reaching the highest Truth. The Absolute is the highest. It is beyond thoughts, but the plane of the angels is within the realm of thoughts. Angels have thought bodies. We can think of the angels, of what powers they possess, etc. Personal God is a little higher than angels, although the angels of the highest order remain attached to the same plane as the personal God does. But we can go beyond the personal God. We can become the essence of the personal God from the human plane. Therefore, we have a greater advantage than the angels, not to speak of lower animals. We must make the best use of our opportunities which we have at our disposal.

This divine spirit, though dwells in us, is not perceptible to senses. Ordinary people cannot grasp, how this divine Being dwells in us and in every atom, because their minds are not as yet spiritually awaken. They live on the surface, and their intellect also is not penetrating. Therefore they cannot go beyond a very definite limit.

But the divine Being can be perceived by those who are possessed of sharp intellect and keen understanding. So we will have to sharpen our intellect, and quicken our imagination, and that is the only means to God-realization. We must withdraw our minds from the objects of distraction, and concentrate it on the cherished goal. It means that concentration of mind is required of us. At the outset, the goal may be ordinary, but gradually we shall focus our mind on a higher point till it reaches the highest goal or the true Self in us. Wise are they who have studied as well as perceived the true Self. When they know it, nothing remains unknown to them. Because they have entered the realm, where ordinary science and knowledge cannot penetrate. Science is within the limits of the sense perceptions. Science starts from the sense perception, and ends in sense perception, after making certain theories and hypothesis. Science starts with observation and experiments, and leads up as far as the senses can go, and then it makes certain deductions and inferences, and those inferences are put into forms of hypothesis, and those are tentatively true for the time being. But the objects of those theories cannot be perceived by any science. The objects of those theories and the truths of those theories are in the realm of metaphysics, or in the realm of philosophy. And the wise man is one who has realized the truths, not only of sciences and philosophies, but also of metaphysics which is the starting point of all religions. Therefore, a God-realized man is greater than a scientist or an ordinary philosopher. If we can go beyond the realm of our ego, what else remains to be accomplished? We then accomplish everything. Then we know all the states of evolution, and of cosmic evolution. We transcend then the realm of the personal God, and come to the nameless and formless entity. It is the universal Spirit which is impersonal. It is the source of all existence. Nothing remains unknown in that state. So those, who have sharpened their intellect and understanding through the practice of concentration and meditation, reached the state of super-consciousness, can realize the immortal Self whose nature others cannot know, nor can they even conceive of it. It is imperceptible for others.

Ordinary mortals are deluded by the objects of the senses. The attraction is tremendously strong. They are hypnotized,

as it were, by the tempting conditions and surroundings. You may ask "Who has hypnotized us?" The external world has hypnotized us. We cannot get away from it, as it is so charming, so attractive. The external world gives us suggestions. We come in contact with the external world through the gates of our senses, and we receive blows which come in the form of suggestions. These suggestions again confuse our minds, and we do not know what we ought to do. We forget our real self, our true nature, and our relation to the supreme as well as what we were in our past and what we shall be in future. We have then forgotten everything. We have hypnotized ourselves unconsciously, and we have come within the realm of a dream, and this dream is called in Sanskrit *maya*. But what is *maya*? It is that by which we have become hypnotized.

Now, in this hypnotic sleep, we are thinking of ourselves as one with the body. We attribute the changes of the body to our real self. Thus when the body is born we think that we are born, and when it is sick, we feel we are sick, and when it is dying, we think we are dying.¹ We think, though wrongly, that these conditions affect the ego in us. But the ego is not subject to these conditions. It is the body only that is subject to these conditions. If we can only de-hypnotize ourselves, we shall come to know again how foolish we have been so long. We have made ourselves fools, by running after things which attract our senses, and give us certain suggestions, and put us into endless confusion. So that de-hypnotization is essential. We must wake up from this sleep of ignorance or delusion. Having awakened from the sleep of delusion, if we come to that state of extreme longing to know the Absolute, then we shall search after the Absolute, and not until then. Ordinary people are contented with their present conditions. They think that they are happy, not knowing what true happiness is. This moment they are happy, and the next moment unhappy. What is the reason? Because they have not yet discovered the source of true happiness. True happiness will come to them, when they reach the highest and when they realize the eternal truth, their immortal nature. The Ruler of Death thus describes the process by which we can realize that immortal nature

¹ Cf. the *Adhyasa-bhashya* on the *Brahmasutra* by Sankara

First of all, we must start from the gross physical body and go deeper to the cause. In our search after the *Atman*, or the true Self, we shall find that what is the immediate cause of the gross physical body, is also the effect of some finer cause. The chain of causation is very closely linked together. Sense perceptions i.e. sense powers and vital powers are the causes of the gross physical body. We must start from the effect, and go to the cause and merge the effect into the cause, and trace the cause of that. Yama says: "Merge the words into thoughts."¹ By words he means the power of speech. The words we utter are the effects, the outward expressions of our ideas and thoughts. They are very closely related. We cannot express a word without having a thought behind it, and we cannot think without thinking in words. So words and thoughts are very closely connected. In fact, they are one and the same. The words are the outward or called physical expressions of thoughts or mental ideas. Similarly, the external objects, which we perceive, are closely related to the sensations of those objects or percepts that are in our mind. So the external objects will be drowned into those sensations. Sense powers will be drowned into the senses, and sensations will be poured into the condition of the mind and mind will be merged into the intellect or the power of determination, and when the power of determination is merged into the ego, then we come to a point, where all these relations of the external world cease to exist. And finally the ego is merged into the higher Self.

We must withdraw first our attention from the external objects, then from the body, then from the sense organs, then from sensations, then from mental conditions, then from the intellectual faculties, and lastly we will come to a point of the sense of I, me and mine or I-consciousness. Even when other senses have ceased to function, there remains that constant sense of I-consciousness. That is the prelude to the revelation of man's real Self.

The real Self has no sense of 'I'. The sense of 'I' means differentiation, carrying as it does the sense of 'not-I', etc. The Absolute is undifferentiated and unlimited, and that stage is said to be the state of extreme peace, calmness, repose and

silence. No words can reach there, and no noise of any kind can exist there.¹ The sun, the moon, and other stars which are visible to our senses are invisible there. How can the earthly light illumine that state? It is beyond the reach of all earthly light, and yet it is not darkness. It is self-luminous and self-sufficient. The sun does not illumine it, but the sun is illumined by it. The stars are luminous because of that self-effulgent light of the *Atman* but the stars cannot illumine that. That self-luminous entity is our true Self. It is immortal, it is infinite. Our individual lives are parts of this immortal Being. Time space and limitations of nature shrink away before its revelation. Death also disappears before it as the mist before the rising sun.

To those who are sleeping in self-delusion the Ruler of Death has a call to self-awakening.² He asks to find the knower of the immortal Self, and learn the method, by which the immortal Self can be realized.³ One must be enlightened by the grace of realized men, for the path is as difficult to tread as to walk on the sharp edge of a razor.⁴ The wise unanimously hold that this is the most dangerous path. If we have any attachment to anything of the world, we cannot rise to the plane spiritual. All kinds of attachment hold us back on the material plane. Even if we love anyone, that will be a stumbling block. So we must rise above all attachments.

I have explained to you just now that we will have to go step by step beyond the realm of the senses, and beyond the reach of intellect, till we catch glimpse of the highest. So long as we are confined to the realm of thoughts, we are not on the highest plane, but on the plane of relativity, which is constantly under the sway of death. This is what the Ruler of Death shows by all these instructions how far the power of death goes.

१। न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्र-तारकम्,

नेमा विदुयतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।

तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं

तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥—कठ उपनिषद्, २।२।१५

२। “उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान् निबोधत ।”—कठ उपनिषद्, १।३।१४

३। क्षुरस्य धारा निशित दुरत्यया * * ।

By death he means 'change'. How far does it go ? As far as the ego, intellect and understanding can go. But beyond that, is the realm of immortality or eternal Being, where death cannot reach.

It is beyond all sounds. Sounds cannot reveal that. But what are sounds ? Sounds are nothing but vibrations of air, and vibration means the constant change. So that sound means a continuous change, which is dying every minute. The sound is constantly dying, and is re-born again and again. It is within the laws of the phenomenal world. Therefore sound cannot reveal the absolute Being. As sound cannot reveal it, so all sense perceptions cannot reveal it. You cannot even touch it. Because it is beyond all sense of touch, and all other senses have evolved from it. Study physiology, and you will find that the primary sense is the sense of touch. Protoplasm has no other sense but the sense of touch. From that all other senses have evolved. The primary sense of touch cannot reach it. It has no form and so how can we see it ? And as it has no form, it is imperceptible, invisible, and, therefore, is unchangeable. Because it is not subject to any of the sense conditions, because it cannot be seen, heard, tasted, smelt, or touched, and, therefore, it is unchangeable or immutable. It is without taste, smell or odour and colour. Now, what is colour ? Colour is nothing but vibration of ether. It is the condition of light. When light ceases, you do not see any colour. There is no colour without light. So we will have to leave it behind. Those who are fascinated by colours are self-deluded ; they do not know what colour is. A rose appears beautiful so long as there is light on it. In darkness it is no longer beautiful, and so with all colours.

Think of the condition of our self-delusion. How we have been living as fools, without knowing the real state of affairs. And here comes Vedanta with a hammer of knowledge, and strikes that hammer on our heads to awaken us, to rise above this self-delusion and to see things as they are in reality. Vedanta teaches men not to remain self-deluded.

What things can we possess ? What things can belong to us of this world ? Is there anything that we can possess ? Nothing. We cannot even possess our own bodies. We will have to leave our bodies behind us when we depart, and everything

connected with the body will remain behind also ; and therefore, a wise man does not feel attracted by anything of the world. You claim your children, husbands, wives, and relatives as your own. But who are they ? Open your eyes and see. They are all children of that immortal Bliss. They are not yours. Why do you claim them ? You may ask : "How will this world go on ?" Let the world die. It would be a blessing, if the world were to die and then it would be the heaven. Such an imperfect world ought not to exist. See how the newspapers are filled every morning. They are being filled with the news of crimes, murders, etc ; and still we glorify this world and think we are living a most wonderful and beautiful life. We think ourselves happy, and we are doing so much good work, improving the world. How can we improve, when we are groping in the darkness of ignorance, and when we ourselves are full of imperfections ? We do not think for a moment of these impossibilities. Let the world die ; if it is bound to die some day, why not sooner ? Those questions are foolish. Therefore we should not think of those questions, but we should try to get the immortal Bliss first, and be prepared to face death at any moment, so that we will know with perfect conviction that we cannot die, and at the last moment we should say that we are deathless.

You know the story of that sage in India who was going through a jungle, and he was repeating "I am He ; I am He ; I am the Absolute ; I am the eternal Truth". As he was going alone in the jungle, suddenly there came a royal tiger and jumped on him and attacked him. Another saint was behind him, he was ahead of the rest, and he saw from the distance that a tiger came and attacked him. The tiger grappled his neck, but still he was uttering "I am He, I am He, deathless, immortal," and passed out. Who can say that ; He alone who has realized it. There is the strength. That strength we need ; that strength we must have.

In fact, pursuit of material things takes away strength from us instead of adding it to us. It is vain and idiotic. We must get out of this condition, rise higher, and realize our own glory and majesty, and feel that we are divine. There is no use of praying, saying : "Give me this, give me that." It is sheer nonsense. Why should He give you ? Why are you hankering

after material things all the time ? Pray for that immortal Bliss. Pray for that knowledge and divine wisdom. Pray for that strength, emancipation, and freedom from all bondage. The wise man never prays for anything of this earth, for they can never enrich him, but they are a hindrance in the way of our highest realization. Beginningless is our immortal life, and it is also endless. It is beyond intellect, beyond understanding, and beyond sense-relation. By knowing that alone, one can transcend the realm of death. Thus the Ruler of Death answers that question. After describing the whole philosophy, he says: "Know that *Atman*. He who has known that immortal Self, has become immortal". Others who have not known the immortal Self, are within the realm of death. Knowing means being. Bacon said: "Knowing is Being". When you have known your immortal Self, you become immortal, and not until then. When you have known God, you have become divine. That is Godconsciousness. Here knowing is identical with being. True love comes only on that exalted state. It is never based upon selfishness. It rests on wisdom or knowledge. In fact, it is the synonym for wisdom. In the highest sense, true love and true knowledge are one.

In fact, self-love is the strongest in ordinary men and women, and every other love is secondary. Why is that love the strongest ? Because it is one with self-consciousness ; it is one with knowledge. You cannot separate your self-love from your self-consciousness. Wherever there is self-consciousness, there must be self-love. They are inseparable. If you read my lecture on *Way to the Blessed Life*, you will get a better understanding of that idea.

This story of Nachiketa and the instruction, given by Yama, the Ruler of Death, will enlighten the minds of all those who hear it and study it, and those who have heard and understood the real spirit, will attain to the everlasting glory and bliss. This is the greatest of all secrets. Why ? Because all other secrets are not worth-having, but this is the most important, because it is directly connected with every mortal. Every mortal wishes to know whether he or she will live after death, and it is a sealed book to them ; but there are some who have opened that book and have unravelled the mystery and realized the Truth. Therefore, it is said to be a secret of secrets. It is

not that we should keep it secret. But it is secret, because other ordinary mortals cannot grasp it, cannot know anything about it, cannot answer this question, and cannot solve this mystery. But if a realized man understands it and explains it before others regularly, others may gradually be enlightened and cultivated. It is through the grace of spiritual teachers alone that the ordinary mortal can grasp the mystery of death and unravel it to their perfect satisfaction. Such is the opinion of Yama, the Ruler of Death.

CHAPTER X

THE IMMORTAL SELF

It has already been noticed that the true Self is beyond the reach of the senses. It is called in Sanskrit *Atman*, which is our true nature. It is imperceptible to the senses, but by knowing it men can transcend the realm of Death (Yama) and become immortal.

The Ruler of Death (Yama) has already described the true nature of the Self and also the method by which one can attain to immortality. But in this chapter, he explains more adequately why the senses and sense powers cannot disclose the true nature of the self. Our true Self which is a part and parcel of the universal Spirit, is divine, but the senses and sense powers cannot reach it, because the self-existent one has pierced the opening of our senses, and has made them go outward, go forward and not inward. Therefore, the people perceive the external objects with the senses. The sense powers are created in such a way and are limited in such a manner that they can only come in direct contact with the external objects of senses, and cannot go beyond them. Our minds are continually dragged outward, and our senses distracted by external objects. Whenever we see any fascinating thing, our mind is attracted by it, and we become attached to it, but the sense powers do not help us in getting away from the sense objects.

So long as we are following the powers of the senses and sensations, we forget what is within us, and we forget our true Self, and become fascinated and charmed by the external objects of the world. But there are some wise men who can withdraw their senses from the external objects, and direct them towards the indwelling higher Self or the *Atman*. But by that method they can realize the true nature of the *Atman*.¹

४। षराश्रितानि वयतुणत् स्वयम्भूतास्मात् पराङ् पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् ।

कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैश्वरावृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥

That process, by which we can withdraw our senses from the external objects, is called the method of the Raja Yoga. By means of that method one can easily overcome all the influence that keep us fettered on the sense plane. But ordinary people lack that power. They try to see and perceive things outside of them. There is in man an instinctive urge for the pursuit of sense objects, but the pursuit of the object of the senses will never reveal to us our true Self, which is immortal and unchangeable. It is, for this reason, that those who are studying external nature, know so little about the inner self. All the scientists, physicists, chemists know nothing about their true Self, because their mind is absorbed by other interests. They can tell you how different things are produced by the combination of atoms and molecules, how the external forces are operating in the external world and what effects they produce upon our bodies etc., but they know nothing about our true Self. In fact, they deny the very existence of the true Self.

That self-existent One, who is the cosmic intelligent Being, who is called by various names, and who is worshipped as the Creator of the universe, is the one who has made these limitations, under which we are living now, and it is for this reason, that we do not know our true Self, and cannot perceive the true nature of the *Atman*, because our senses and sense powers drag our minds outside, and keep the mental functions attached to the objects of senses.

Now the method, by which we can purify ourselves and control the senses, is described in the Raja Yoga, and by following that method, one can accomplish most wonderful results. Therefore, the Yogis are those, who have realized their true Self and do not care for the external objects of senses, because the objects of senses will never reveal the true and the divine Being, who is the Lord of the universe.

Ordinary men, groping as they do in the darkness of ignorance and self-delusion, follow the objects of senses, and remain tied to the realm of the senses, and, consequently, they are caught in the widespread snare of death. Those who follow the sense powers, and run after sense objects like objects of sight, hearing, smelling, etc., remain within the realm of death. They cannot transcend the realm of death, because they are mortals and self-deluded. But those, who have controlled

these sense powers and do not run after objects which produce temporary pleasant sensations, have spiritual longing for immortality. Consequently, they do not find the unchangeable Reality in the midst of all changes. But they try to rise above them. Because they see that the objects of senses are constantly changing, and the same thing never appears twice.

Really we are living in the midst of continuous change. The atoms and the molecules are constantly whirling with tremendous speed. Our body and senses too are not the same as they were yesterday. The things, which we saw yesterday, do not exist today. They are changed, and the change is so minute that we cannot perceive it with our gross senses. But if we analyze the science of the senses, we will find that they are continuously changing, and in the midst of these changes there is an unchangeable thing. Ordinary mortals, who are running after objects of senses, do not think of that unchangeable something. But the wise ones try to go deep to the bottom, and discover the unchangeable substance of the universe. If there be anything that is unchangeable and immutable, why should we run after all these things which produce pleasures and last only for a moment. The seekers after immortality do not care for such things, which produce transitory results, but they want to know that which is unchangeable and immortal.

The realm of death spreads very far. By 'death' we do not mean absolute annihilation, but change of form, i.e. constant change. We are dying every minute. Now, in the midst of this continuous series of births and deaths how can we become immortal? Is it possible for us to become immortal? That is the question which rises in the minds of the seekers after Truth. We cannot be immortal with our gross physical bodies, because these bodies will not exist, if the change is stopped. If the change suddenly ceases, then this body will go to pieces. So, those who expect to become immortal with this gross physical body are deluded. They are living in the darkness of self-delusion. Even our subtle bodies (*sukshma sharira*), which are known as spiritual bodies or which the Theosophists call the astral bodies, are continuously changing. They are subject to growth and evolution. Even then with our subtle bodies we are not absolutely immortal, and are not free from change. Now, where is the realm which is not subject to death?

Only the true Self in us is deathless and unchanging. If we can understand our true Self and if we can realize our true nature, which is beyond all changes, then we have become immortal. And by realizing our immortal nature, we have realized the divine Being who is the Ruler of the phenomenal universe. When that realization comes, all our desires are fulfilled. At present we are suffering from so many desires which we cannot gratify in this world and, therefore, we create an imaginary heaven in order to comfort our minds, to console ourselves with the idea that even after death we shall go to a realm where these desires will be gratified.

Heavens are nothing but places where we are supposed to gratify our human desires, but which we cannot gratify. But even by gratifying those desires in the heaven, we shall not escape the realm of changes. If we analyze correctly, we will find that heavens are also subject to changes. Take, for instance, the pleasure of music or any other pleasure, which is supposed to exist in heavens. Now, to hear music, we must have sense organs i.e. we must have ears. We cannot hear music in the same way as we do on this plane without having ears. So also there must be sound. Now, what is sound? Sound is nothing but the vibration of air. There must be air, and that sound means a continuous change of the particles of air, and those particles will enter into the sense organs all the time of hearing and produce a certain sensation in the brain, and that will produce some pleasant or unpleasant feeling. In order to enjoy music, we will have to go through so many conditions, and even then how long can we hear one kind of music? If we try to hear music long on this plane, we soon get tired. For instance, if we continuously hear music of one kind or of various kinds all the time, without hearing anything else, we will soon get tired. In twenty-four hours, we would get so tired that we would not like to hear it again, and that would not be a pleasure to us, and we should not be able to enjoy it after a few days. So, in order to enjoy the pleasures of the celestial realm, we must have some kind of body, or some kind of sense organs, which are subject to growth and decay and which are continuously changing. So, by going to heaven we cannot escape the realm of changes, but we will go on in the same way, as we are doing here, and, therefore, the wise men, who analyse

the true nature and conditions of the phenomenal world, find that heavenly conditions are within the realm of all phenomena. They may be finer and higher, but they are also subject to change, and, therefore, the wise ones do not care to go to heavens. They want to go beyond heavens, where they would remain in a state of perpetual bliss from eternity to eternity, without any change and without losing self-identity or self-consciousness. The true Self is the knower of all conditions, and knower of all external and internal objects. It is the source of all intelligence, knowledge, and consciousness. In fact, that by which we know ourselves, we feel our pleasures and pains, is our true Self.

Here, at present, we are all sitting, but at the same time we are also aware that we are sitting. By what knowledge do we know this? Where does this knowledge lie? Does it lie in the body? Does it exist in the brain alone? Where does it exist? If we can know where it exists, then we have found its source, and then we have discovered our true Self which is immortal. Some people may think that it is the gross physical body with all its organs which is conscious of all the external and internal conditions, but that is too broad a statement. We will have to state more clearly and more minutely. We will have to examine what part in us has this knowledge and intelligence. We know that the body itself is a combination of matter, atoms and molecules, and material forces, which by itself cannot produce that knowledge and self-consciousness which make us living beings. Again, the sense organs and the sense powers, being also the result of material combinations or material forces, are also insentient. They have no intelligence of their own. There is something within us which is not the product of atoms and molecules, or of material forces, and that immaterial something is the source of all knowledge, intelligence and consciousness.

Mind, intellect, and sense powers are likewise insentient or unintelligent substances. They are dull like pieces of iron. The pieces of iron cannot illumine any object. Iron has no light or heat in it, but when we put it into a furnace and heat it, it becomes red hot and it can illumine other things and produce heat, but that heat is absorbed from the fire. By coming in contact with the fire it becomes heated,

and it absorbs that power of illumining other objects. Similarly, the insentient substances of mind, intellect and sense organs, by coming in touch with the fire of our true Self, appear to be intelligent, but, in reality, they are unintelligent. It is the fire of *Atman*, the fire of our true Self that is manifesting itself through the different layers of our being the intellectual, mental and sensuous planes of existence.

If we analyse in this way, we will find that the innermost part of our being is the true Self which is immaterial, immutable and indestructible. Nothing can change that intelligent knower which is within us. Whether we go to sleep or we wake up, and whether we feel any particular sensation of touch or smell, of sight or hearing, the knower is always the same. That is a constant quantity within us. It has no change, and it is constant and unchanging. If you only analyse and watch the different conditions of your own mind, and see how that witness-like something is constantly watching and is conscious of all these conditions, then you will be able to know how this true Self is absolutely unchangeable and always of the same nature.

That by which we know that there is a pleasing colour or a pleasant taste, or an odour, that by which we know the feeling of touch, whether it is a pleasant touch, the sweet touch of a baby or of one who loves us, and that by which we know all the sensations, pleasant or unpleasant, is our true Self. That is immortal. That is the answer to the question which was asked by this young seeker after Truth who went to the abode of Death. The pupil asked: "If there be Immortality, what is that immortal Soul and what is that like?" To that question the Ruler of Death said: "It is formless, yet it is the source of all forms. It is not like the gross physical body, but it produces the gross physical body by its powers. All powers that we manifest during our lifetime, proceed from that common source, which is immortal, and if we forget and do not recognize that immortal part within us, we cannot become immortal". Now how can we become immortal? The most attractive things of the world exist in relation to us so long as we are conscious of them. If we can imagine just for a moment that if we become unconscious of our own existence, where will all these

things be, and where will they go? Will they remain in relation to us? No. They will disappear. We shall not be conscious of anything. Suppose we shut our eyes, ears, and all our senses, then if anything touches our body, we shall not be conscious, if we withdraw all our senses. We can do that. It is possible that we can withdraw our mind from every part of our body, and if anything touches any part of our body, we do not feel that touch, and that will give direct proof to us that our mind is all-powerful, and our body has no intelligence, or has no sensation. Then even we can withdraw ourselves from the mental conditions. The mental conditions may rise, or may not rise. All the desires, necessities, and troubles that bother us now, will become non-existent, if we can withdraw ourselves from the mental conditions. But where will the external world then go? We do not know. It will exist in relation to others, who are living on the sense plane, but it will not exist in relation to those who are not living on the sense plane.

This world as it is and as we are perceiving it with our senses, does not exist in relation to our departed spirits. They do not see these things, unless they come in direct contact with these things, and remain earth-bound. These things do not exist. When we fall asleep, all beautiful things like sunrise, flowers, and everything else vanish, but in a dream state, we may find a beautiful landscape, and we may enjoy all the beautiful sceneries. Those mental pictures would be just as real as the pictures of our waking state at that time. But these pictures will vanish, and will not rise, as we wake up.

In the same manner, it can be shown that all these things which are on the sense plane i.e., which can be perceived by the senses, have relative existence, devoid of absolute existence. They exist only under certain conditions, and when the conditions change, they do not exist in relation to us, and, therefore, I say that if we suddenly become unconscious, in our faint state, all these things vanish. Those who have fainted, will know that a curtain drops, and everything disappears. You may fall on the floor, and you would not know where you are, that is you are not conscious at all, as all the connections are cut off. You might get hurt in your body, but you are not conscious of it. The body may be injured, but you are not

conscious of it. So our relation with the body is a very transitory relation. It is not a permanent relation. Though we consider it as a permanent relation simply through ignorance, yet we do not think of these things. Because we remain self-deluded. But a wise man is one who does not delude himself and sees things as they are in reality. If the body be unconscious of anything, why should we call it conscious entity? If the body cannot know anything, why should we attribute that power of knowledge to the body? In fact, the brain is nothing but an instrument. It is not the brain that perceives everything. Some of the materialists and physiologists have declared that brain is everything, and brain perceives everything. But brain is only an instrument like a piano. A piano cannot play by itself. The keys may be perfect, but it needs a player, and that player of the piano is our true Self, the *Atman*. That player is immortal. So the music is not in the piano, but in the mind of the player. Similarly, all the functions and all the power of intelligence, the desires and consciousness, exist in our true Self, and not in the brain, not in the sense organs, and not in our physical body. When we know this, we transcend the realm of death. If we can know our true Self here and now, we have risen above all changes, physical, mental and intellectual as well as the realm of death. When we transcend them and rise to a higher plane, we begin to catch glimpse of the immortal Self. Then we come to know that the true Self is the source of all knowledge and consciousness. But ordinarily we think that we get knowledge from outside. In fact, we never get an iota of knowledge from outside, but it grows from within as a reaction to environment. It is a kind of reflex action. External objects produce a certain stimulus to the system, and in our reaction to it, we derive knowledge from within it. As for example, take an idiot and try to explain a fact which he does not understand. Now if his intellect is dull of understanding and not sharp, and if his intellect is not quick, all your words will fall flat on his ears, and he will not grasp them at all. It shows that we cannot pour knowledge into a person who is not developed and has not the power to manifest the inner knowledge which proceeds from the true Self or *Atman*.

Now that, by which we know our own existence as well as the existence of the external world, the sun, the moon and

the stars, is the true Self. Therefore each individual soul, in its true nature, is all-knowing. Ignorance is nothing but the darkness, produced by a thick veil that stands between our true Self and individual ego. When that veil drops off, the light of intelligence flows into our ego, and then the ego acts as an intelligent ego.

At this stage the Ruler of Death explained that question which was asked by the young seeker after Truth: What part is immortal and where does it exist? The Ruler of Death said that it exists in us, and our true Self is immortal by nature. So we do not have to attain to immortality by serving somebody, or by going somewhere, but we can attain to immortality by knowing our immortal nature. And by knowing our true Self, we know God, because God exists as our true Self, or our true Self is part and parcel of the universal Self.

Here we must not misunderstand the meaning of the word 'Self' which I have been using here. But those who are not familiar with the Sanskrit term *Atman*, may misunderstand me. They may think that we are trying to be extremely selfish. The true Self does not refer to this ordinary self, which makes us selfish, but it means the *Atman*, the divine and immortal part within us. It is the unchangeable element of the ego. If we then wish to be immortal, we must try to realize the true Self, or the *Atman*, or the divine spark within us. That realization will bring unto us salvation of the highest kind. No matter wherever we go after death, we shall retain that spiritual illumination once acquired.

The true Self is the knower of all dreams as well as of all conditions of the waking state. It knows where the waking state ends, where the dream state begins and where the dream ends and the waking state begins. Who knows it that it is the constant factor in the midst of all changes. It retains its identity throughout. When one knows it, one becomes absolutely free, and rises above all pains and sufferings. If we know the true Self, we shall never worry, and we shall never be anxious regarding our future, whether we continue to exist or not. That question will not bother us any longer. It will be answered once for all, and the means to it is to withdraw our mind from external objects, and fix it upon our true Self. If we become unconscious of the external world for the time and think deeply

of our inner Self and realize it, we can come down to the plane of our senses and enjoy the external conditions without forgetting our true Self, which is immortal. All worries and anxieties will then disappear.

How much we are worrying at present for these external conditions ! We are trying to mould them and make them perfect so that they will be perfect forever. Shall we ever be able to do it ? No. No matter in whatever way we may try, we cannot stop the change that are going on all the time. Therefore a wise man does not bother his head regarding the changes of the external world, but he tries to realize his immortal nature first, and then rise above all worries, regarding the future life, death and all relevant conditions.

The true Self is infinite, and we are all parts of the Infinite. In fact, each one of us is a portion of the Infinite. We are connected with the Infinite, but at present we have become finite, falling within the limits of the sense powers, as well as mental and physical conditions. There is a deep striving in each soul to outgrow those limitations, and become conscious of the Infinite. The soul will not be contented until it has realized its infinite nature, and that is the goal toward which we are running consciously or unconsciously. Anything that limits us, binds us and makes us remain confined within certain conditions and limitations, is pleasant, but it does not satisfy our spiritual cravings. When we have outgrown all these limitations, the true emancipation will come to us. We shall then enjoy an unshaken peace under all conditions and circumstances, knowing that our true Self is immortal, that we are parts of the Infinite, that we are all-knowing, and that we are unchangeable and divine in our deepest essence.

CHAPTER XI

THE REALM OF IMMORTALITY

We have already learnt that our true Self is the knower of our waking and dream states, and that, by which we know all the actions of our waking state, and all the activities of our body, senses and mind, is our true Self. It is the same as that by which we know all our dreams. When we dream, we are conscious of our dreams. That self-conscious entity which perceives all the various kinds of dreams, is also the same self-conscious entity which perceives all the activities of sense perceptions during the waking state. We do neither lose our identity, when we go into the dream state, nor do we lose our identity, when we do not dream in our sound sleep.

If we analyse these three states of consciousness, waking, dream and dreamless sleep, we find that there is something in us, which is the knower of all these states, and is always the same. He who dreamt yesterday, is dreaming today and tonight, and is doing the works of the waking state and tomorrow and day after tomorrow the same conscious self will go on perceiving these things. Although the dreams may come and go, yet we never dream the same thing twice, and we never perform the same act twice during our waking state, though we may think that we have been performing the same thing over and over again. But it is not the same. On a searching analysis we find that the physical and the mental conditions are always changing. The physiological conditions are also subject to change. When a dream state comes up and ends in a waking state, and when a waking state goes down and ends in a dream state, who perceives the beginning and ending of all these different states of consciousness? In fact, he who perceives the beginning and ending of these various states of consciousness, is our true Self, and it is he who perceives that the waking state is gone and the dream state has begun—that the dreamless sleep state has begun, and the waking state has arisen. All these changes of mental states are perceived by one's self-conscious entity or *Atman*. That entity is not subject

to change, but it is always the same knower all the time.

The real knower does not change, but the conditions change, just as the states of consciousness do change.¹ If we try to understand our true Self, we find that this self-conscious entity is unlimited in consciousness, although our ego may be limited in consciousness. But the ego is not the same as that which perceives these different states of consciousness. The ego is only a phase, or appearance, or manifestation, or limited condition of this unlimited conscious entity.

The conscious entity is not subject to death. It never dies, and, therefore, it is said that by thinking of this self-conscious entity which is the knower of these different states of consciousness and by meditating upon this self-conscious entity, one becomes free from sorrow, free from grief, free from all misery, and even free from death. But those who have not realized that, and who have not understood this self-conscious entity or true nature of our being, are always haunted by the fear of death. When a pleasant feeling arises, they are elated, when an unpleasant feeling comes, they are melancholy. What is the cause for it? These states of consciousness come up like the waves, and their egos are just like little canoes. As the waves swell up, the egos feel elated and go high, and as the waves go down in the hollow, they feel that they are going down. They wrongly identify their real Self with these empirical changes. They lack self-control, they have no idea of what is permanent and unchangeable behind the ego. So we will have to go behind the ego to discover that unchanging element in us. If anger rises we identify ourselves with anger. We cannot maintain a detached mood, that is, we cannot remain like a witness. When passion rises in the mind, we feel we are one with that passion. The result is endless suffering. We do not care to understand that our body or the mind is not our soul and that while there is a change in the body or the mind, the soul is unchanging. The self-conscious entity or *Atman* in us is like an unchanging witness to all empirical changes. While it knows all changes and perceives all kinds of sensations, it stands always unaffected by the physical and

¹ Here the real knower (*jñata*) means the *Atman* which is the assuming ground and cause of everything phenomenal

mental modifications. That part is immortal, and by knowing that, one becomes immortal. The ego is only the threshold or gate by which we can enter into the domain of this immortal entity which is our true Self or *Atman*.

There runs the lines: "He who knows this living soul or the ego which eats honey", etc. The 'honey' here connotes the idea of the 'pleasant sensation' derived from all the objects of senses. The complete meaning of the upanishadic lines are: "He who knows this living soul which eats honey or perceives the objects of senses, as being the true Self, the immortal Self, and which is always near, is ever free from fear". Here we must consider two things: first the ego, and second, the principle that transcends the ego, and which is the unchangeable part or the background of the ego or the sense of 'I'. The sense of 'I' does not mean anything, if the conscious entity does not animate it. The sense of 'I' is merely a mental condition. It is the intellectual faculty which produces this sense. But what does this amount to, if there be no self-conscious entity behind it? So the ego is meaningless without a self-conscious entity behind it.

Now the sense of 'I' varies, for instance, I am weak; I am fat; I am thin; I am lame; I am blind; I am deaf; I am diseased; I am happy, miserable, etc., are so many different states of this sense of 'I'. That is, the sense of 'I' is attached to every condition of the mind, senses, body, intellect, memory, etc. But behind this sense of 'I', there is self-consciousness, by which we say we know that is I, who am suffering, who am enjoying, who am believing, and who am talking, etc. So the subject of that sense of 'I' is that self-conscious entity, or the *Atman*, and this sense of 'I' varies in the time of sleep. In the dreamless sleep (*sushupti*) too, we do not feel the sense of 'I', but in truth, the self-conscious *Atman* shines there all the time, and we feel its presence when we awake, and we say: "I was sleeping with pleasure". This self-conscious and all-knowledge entity (*Atman*) is very near to all the devotees who pray to it as God.

The self-conscious entity knows no division of time such as present, past and future, but at the same time present, past and future will not remain if the witness-like self-conscious entity or *Atman* does exist as their support or ground (*pratishtha*).

Now do we know that there is such a thing as future? We

know it by our self-conscious entity. If we are unconscious, we do not know the past, future, and present. Therefore the Lord of the past and future is this self-conscious entity or *Atman* and this living soul in its true nature is one with it. Because this living soul or the ego, who enjoys the pleasures and is limited by this sense of *I, me, mine* and also enjoys and suffers, will not exist, if it were separated from the self-conscious entity. The ego which is not conscious of itself, is equal to the non-ego. But the conscious entity is not limited by any particular sense of *I, me* or *mine*. The conscious entity in each one of us is the same. The conscious entity in me cannot be differentiated from the conscious entity in you, nor in any living creature. We can only differentiate the manifestations and not the support or ground of the manifestations. We can say that as you are a conscious entity, so am I a conscious entity; but when you have any particular thoughts or ideas or expressions, then in those particular expressions or ideas or thoughts we may vary, but as the self-conscious entities, we are one. If we can abstract our self-conscious entity from the particular conditions or states of consciousness, mental, sensuous or physical, then that self-conscious entity (*Atman*) is undifferentiated, and cannot be differentiated in any way from each other. In fact, it is one self-conscious entity that is manifesting through so many individual forms. All living creatures are like the centres through which this one self-conscious entity is manifesting its intelligence and consciousness.¹

A dog has self-conscious entity or the *Atman*, just as much as we have in ourselves. A dog is conscious of his own self. He may have his sense powers and mental powers limited, but still he has his mind and feelings. He has his perceptions and passions like anger, hatred, jealousy, love, pleasure, which are only different in degree. A cat has those things, and even a minute animalcule has self-consciousness. Wherever there is life, there is self-consciousness. Even in vegetables, there is a very imperfect expression of self-consciousness. Some of the modern scientists admit that the vegetables have their souls.

¹ It has been described in the *Upanishad* that when the air passes through different holes of a flute, it produces different sounds of different pitches, but the air is one and the same, so the *Atman*, when manifests through different beings, appears as different but, in truth, it is one and the same, and is one without the second.

In fact, there is a theory that every atom has its soul, and some of the scientists admit this theory. So wherever there is life, there is soul. We cannot limit this field of the souls, as the whole universe is a living soul. So there is no such thing as the dead matter in this universe. What we understand by dead matter, is not really dead, and it has latent life in it. And so, from the minutest animalcule up to the highest bright spirits, gods, the personal God, there are only different gradations of the manifestation of this one self-conscious entity, which is infinite and all-pervading.

But in order to know the universal self-conscious entity, we must know what is present in our egos. That is the nearest. If we have known its nature, we have found that it is immortal, and then we have no more fear of death. Now why do we fear death? Because we are attached to the conditions of our body and sense perceptions, and we do not want to give them up. We have a desire to cling to them with firm tenacity. Therefore we have fear of losing those things at the time of death. We must know that our *Atman* cannot possess anything of this material world, and not even this body which does not belong to it, but is only the instrument, which the egos have created to fulfil certain desires. The self-conscious entity does not possess a chair, or clothes, or furniture, or wealth, or real estate, or children. It cannot possess children, because children have also their *Atman* in them, which is one with the self-conscious entity of the parents. It is really one and the same. There is no child and no father in that realm as well as there is no mother, no sister, and no brother but all are self-conscious entities (*Atman*). All these human relations come with the egos like the sense of *I, me, mine*. But when we take God as the conscious entity, we go beyond the relation of *I, me, mine*, and that is the eternal realm. That is the realm of immortality, and, therefore, Christ said that there is no husband, no father, no mother, no marriage, and no giving in marriage in heaven. That Heaven is within us. Jesus the Christ also said: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you". We do not know it, and we think that Heaven is above the clouds, and we shall go there after death, and shall enjoy celestial music. No. That is not Heaven. That is as imperfect as the earth, and as useless as our earth, and all earthly conditions are there. But the

Heaven, which is within us, is eternal. There is neither death, nor earthly relations, but everything is one, everything is divine, and everything is perfect. So, if we try to go to Heaven, we must go through the gates of our egos, and enter into the realm of our self-conscious entity, which is our true Self, and is divine and perfect. Then we shall understand the meaning of "the Kingdom of Heaven is within you", and not until then. Then we shall escape the fear of death. Death can only take the body and the senses as well as certain states of our mind which are subject to change. But our self-conscious entity or true Self (*Atman*), which is immortal, is above all these changes. So death cannot touch or injure us in any way.

This *Atman* which is the background of each individual ego, is the same as the *Atman* of the Christ. Now this is a thing which you will not find so clearly expressed in any language other than Sanskrit, or in any philosophy or religion other than Vedanta. If you find it anywhere else, it is only borrowed from Vedanta. It is the peculiar fact that our true Self is one with the true Self of God or of any Prophet. And here we must not forget that we must go behind the sense of *I*, *me* and *mine* first, otherwise we will get into trouble, and we will think that this ego is one with God. In fact, the true Self is the witness of all the conditions, and is not limited by the sense of *I*, *me* and *mine*. It is same as the *Atman* of this universe. It is the cosmic consciousness. And that idea is expressed here showing the relation between the individual soul and the universal spirit. The absolute entity is the background as well as the producer of the individualized ego in a human body. The individualized ego in the cosmos, which is called the First-Born Lord of the universe, is the creator, preserver, and governor of all phenomena.

Why is He called the First-Born Lord? Because He came into existence before the elements of nature, and all other things of the material world came later. In fact, the Lord and the Creator, the cosmic ego, of which our egos are but parts, came first, and He is the first manifestation of the Absolute. And the Absolute is beyond all cosmic conditions. The Absolute is the source of consciousness and intelligence. It is the source of all powers and forces that are manifested in the phenomenal world. Therefore, He is called the First-Born

Lord of the universe, because He had His birth before the elements and the creation of the world. And after producing the highly advanced souls, like angels and archangels and all other perfected souls who dwell in the heavens, the First-Born Lord produced all the phenomena and human beings, and then entered into the hearts of all beings to enjoy the conditions of the phenomenal world. Each individual ego is the receptacle of the cosmic consciousness, which is the consciousness of the First-Born Lord of the universe. We are gaining all these powers as well as manifesting these powers through that eternal Being. He who sees and realizes this relation between the individual ego and the cosmic ego of the First-Born Lord of the universe, perceives the absolute Brahman, which is the eternal Truth. This Brahman is determined by the *mahavakya*, *tat tvamasi*—‘You are already that’. Here the Ruler of Death is answering the question which the young seeker after Truth asked: “What is that which is beyond all relativity, beyond good and evil, beyond virtue and vice, beyond past, present and future time relations, and beyond space relations?” In answering that question, the Ruler of Death avers that, that from which the individual ego as well as the First-Born Lord have arisen, is beyond all relativity, and is the Absolute. That Absolute is not very far from us. It is within us. It is the source of our intelligence. It is the basis of our consciousness, as well as the foundation of our existence. Therefore, we live and breathe and have our beings in that absolute Being.

And after describing this, he goes on revealing what else has come into existence from that source of consciousness. This *Atman*, or the absolute Being, is the source of life-force or *prana*, which manifests itself in this world. Now you know this life-force or vital energy. That by which we are the living beings, that which makes the world living, and that which is the moving principle in our phenomenal existence, has come out of that one common source. As, on the one hand, all energy, all consciousness, and all intelligence have come from that absolute Being, so, on the other hand, all the mechanical forces, the material forces, and the life-forces, that which is vital, have also come into existence from that Being. That conscious entity within us, is not only the source of consciousness, but it is the source of the life-force or *prana*; and we know

that *prana* or the life-force, is the cause of all mental conditions like, intelligence, thoughts, will, sense powers, organic activities, and physical activities. So wherever we see any sign or response of life, there we see that life-force has come into existence, because the *Atman* is there. Or we can come to the same conclusion in another way, because the life-force is there, therefore, there must be *Atman* behind it. In fact, *Atman* and life-force go together hand in hand. Wherever there is the expression of the one, there is also the expression of the other, and it may be latent imperfect in manifestation. From the angels or archangels down to the lowest amoeba or protoplasm or animalcule, wherever there is activity of life-force, there is the manifestation of that self-conscious entity (*Atman*). So you see that the whole world can be reduced into two things: the one is consciousness, and the other is activity or motion. But the cause of consciousness is the intelligence, and the cause of motion is the *prana* or life-force or energy. It is the life-force that manifests itself as heat, light, electricity, and motion. It is the same life-force that moves the cars on the streets, and moves the engines when it is manifesting on the material plane through matter, and when it manifests itself on the organic plane, it becomes human magnetism,—sense perceptions on the sense plane, intellectual activities on the plane of intellect, spiritual activities on the plane of spirit. The same force is pervading all these various planes of existence. When we perceive anything with our senses, for instance, we see colour, and hear sound, we find that, as on the one hand, colour is the expression of that life-force, so, on the other hand, the perception of sound is the expression of that same life-force. The organic functions of the organs of sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touch are also produced by the life-force (*prana*). Chemical combinations are also the expressions of that same life-force, and this life-force comes from that one source, the *Atman*.

Now we see the tendency of these teachings is to show the unity in variety. That is, starting from all these various manifestations, we are going to that one common centre, which is the source of all, and when we have discovered that one common centre, we have risen above all.

Now it can be given another illustration: Take an

external object like fire or heat like the sun, and it can be described, "That fire which is hidden in the fire-sticks" Now you see the time, when these teachings were given, was prehistoric. It was a time, when no other means of making fire was known but by rubbing two sticks thousands and thousands of years before the Christian era. And so the illustration is archaic, but still it has a meaning of the latest theories. It has also been said by the Veda: "That fire which is hidden in the fire sticks". In ancient times, before they made any fire, they would take two pieces of wood, and then rub them together. Sometimes there was a kind of wooden bowl, and a thick stick used to grind it, and by friction they used to produce fire, and then in that fire they used to pour butter as oblation. They used to invoke in the vedic *yajnas* (sacrifices) the bright spirits. In fact, the fire was the symbol of bright spirits. They did not worship the fire,¹ but the fire was a purifier. The fire was known as the giver of life, light and heat. In the Rîg Veda, we find that fire is again considered to be the priest in the Vedas. As, in the first verse of the Rîg Veda, it is said: "We salute fire, we salute 'Igna', who is the priest of the bright spirits, the mouth of the bright spirits, the mouth of the god". If anything is poured into the fire, the smoke will rise up and it will touch the heavens, and the bright spirits will eat it through the mouth of the fire. The flame of fire is described as the tongue of the *devas*, and if they wanted to pour anything, they would pour it on the flame i.e., on the tongue, so that it could be eaten. They were poetic, and if they had not been so poetic they could not have discovered those truths. Their minds were childlike and simple, but they were seekers after Truth all the same, and the truths which they discovered are the eternal Truth, which are today supported by the scientists and best thinkers of the twentieth century. So, that fire which is hidden in the fire sticks, and is ignited day after day by men, when they wake up and then bring oblations, is also the manifestation of that *prana* or life-force. It is the life-force that has produced this fire, heat, etc. The same life-force produces the heat in our system, by which we digest our food, and organic

¹ When in the vedic time, fire (*Agni*) was considered as the symbol of the sun and the worship of fire was in practice.

combustion takes place due to which we have fire in our system as heat.

Now, if you have control over the *prana* or the vital force through the breathing exercises, you will generate heat, and you will see how that heat will purify the cells of your system. You will begin to perspire as if you are just bathing in the sunshine for a long time. You will begin to perspire, and all the impurities will be driven out. That will show that there is heat in you, and that heat is nothing but what we call fire. In the fire sticks, when the fire is hidden, we do not see it. The heat is latent, and it comes out by friction. How does it lie hidden? There the Hindu scriptures give an illustration: "As a child lies hidden in the womb of its mother, so the fire is hidden in the sticks". It has already been said before that fire is also hidden in our own systems in the same way. This internal fire is taken care of by the Yogis who never let that fire go out. As a mother protects her child by not eating or drinking anything that will hurt or injure the child, so a Yogi protects the fire or the life-force by not eating and drinking such things as would hurt or injure that fire. Therefore Yogis live a very different kind of life. They are moderate. They practise abstinence, and they observe a great many rules and regulations to protect that fire of vitality. It is the loss of vitality that brings all diseases, nervousness, unhappiness, nervous prostration, insanity, and all physical conditions. If the parents were careful and if they reserved their vital energy, their children would not suffer, and those parents who do not preserve their own vital energy and beget children, are worse than criminals. The Government ought to punish them for bringing into existence such weak and unhealthy, diseased, and half insane children. The dogs and the cats die and take human form, and for the first time they take that step in evolution. People who wish to improve the social conditions, should first observe these laws. The social reform will take place when the individuals have corrected their own weaknesses; and, therefore, Vedanta tells us to correct the individuals first and then the society will take care of itself. That fire which is considered by those who sacrifice oblations into the fire as well as that fire which is considered as very sacred by the Karma Yogis, by the Zoroastrians and by the Hindus

is also considered as the manifestation of that *prana*. You know that the Parsees began with that same idea that fire is the symbol of the bright spirit, and they still keep the fire burning all the time in the temple. Upon the alter there was no image but fire, and even today there is a fire in Bombay, which was first started in the 7th century before Christ. That fire has been kept alive by the Zoroastrians. That fire is still kept in the temple of the Zoroastrians in Bombay. In fact, they do not worship the fire, but they consider it sacred, just as the earth, water, and everything is considered to be sacred. The moment we begin to see Divinity as all-pervading, everything becomes sacred. When we think that everything is matter, then we are not conscious of any divine presence. Then we are also considered as materialists, atheists, agnostics, and our life is not worth-living, because we do not understand these things. The agnosticism is nothing but an expression of ignorance. I think it would be a misery to remain in darkness.

Then again that is *prana* whence the sun rises. Now what that solar energy is? We often say that we have gained our life from the solar energy, but that is only a partial energy of the *prana*. The solar energy has come from the *prana* or the life-force, and that life-force is universal. And if the *prana* is universal, then the solar energy derives its life and strength from that *prana*. That from where the sun rises in its own glory and that into which it sets, there all the *devas*, or the bright spirits, the angels, and the archangels are contained. None can go beyond, and this is that Absolute. That *prana* has come from the Absolute. As I have said that if there be any activities in the *devas*, mental or physical, and in the bright spirits or the gods, then that is the expression of the *prana*. Who can go beyond that? The moment we begin to think that we are going beyond that, we are using that force or the *prana*. The very attempt to go beyond will be possible only in and through the *prana* or the life-force. Therefore that *prana* is the highest of all forces, and that is the expression of the absolute *Prana*.¹

"What is there in the visible world? What is here in the visible world, is the same as there in the absolute Brahman, in

¹ Here the absolute *Prana* is not the common life-breath, but is the transcendental *Atman*.

the invisible world ; and what is there, the same is here". Now this is the most wonderful passage. That is, everything that is in the Absolute, is manifested in the sun, moon, stars, and in everything. There is no glory of any individual, but it is the glory of that Absolute. If you invent a wonderful machine, that is not your glory, but it is the glory of the Absolute. The Absolute possesses that power.² So, if a nation be victorious, that is not glory to that particular nation, but it is the glory of that power, which is in the Absolute. We ignorantly glorify ourselves for knowing the absolute Truth. But whatever is manifested on this plane, is there in the Absolute, and whatever is there, is here. Every force, every activity, every work, every invention, and every expression of thought, great or small, is there in the Absolute.

The sun also represents the power and the life-giving energy which the Absolute possesses, and that is all. It is not for the glory of man, nor of any bright angel, and nor of any particular being, but it is the glory of the Absolute which is the self-conscious entity of the universe. He who does not see this Absolute in all beings, does not know the immortal Truth. That mortal and ignoramus goes from death to death and is subject to be born again and die again ; but he who knows this absolute One as the fountain-head of everything, is free from death, and in order to become immortal, we must first realize this Absolute in us which is one with the conscious entity of the universe. The life-force in us is a part of the life-force of the universe, and that universal life-force is manifesting through so many things, and when we perceive that unity in the midst of diversity, we have reached the realm of immortality ; otherwise we are within the realm of the cycle of death and birth.

² This Absolute is the determinate (*saguna*) Brahman.

Here it may be noted that in the Vedanta philosophy, you find no idea of the eternal punishment, or the hell-fire doctrine¹ That passage which refers to man's going from death to death, only implies that he is born again and again. He is subject to the cycle of birth and death. One cannot go from death to death, unless he is born again and again. Because death presupposes birth. If we are going to die several times, we must be born also several times, otherwise we cannot die. And this recurrence of birth and rebirth is not a curse ; rather it is not a disease, but is the natural condition of every mortal. It is a common experience that cause produces effect. Because so long as the cause remains, there will also remain its effect. Cause and effect are inseparable. So long as causes that have brought us to this plane, remain unchanged, it is futile to seek salvation from the wheels of births and deaths. If we have come one, why should we not come again ? But people often have peculiar idea about themselves. They think that they did not exist before, and that they had been created suddenly out of nothing only to live eternally. Obviously this idea is absurd. Science teaches us that nothing can come out of nothing. We cannot come into existence, if we did not exist before.² If this be the fact, then why have we come to this plane ? Is there any purpose behind the process, or is it aimless and futile ? No, we have come to this world with some definite purpose, to gain fuller knowledge and vision of life.

Now, what are we going to gain in this life ? Do we ever think of that ? Few people care to pause and ponder. Emerson said : "The hardest thing in the world is to think". Ordinary people in their rush and clamour of life have no time to think this problem. They are always busy with their material pursuits. There is no thinking on their own initiative. They do not see with their eyes, nor do they feel with their hearts. Their thoughts are some one else's opinions. When they feel any need for religion, they visit the church, and derive lessons from them as their own experiences.

In fact, they have no time to think of the meaning of life.

¹ The idea of the hell-fire can be found in the Hindu epics as well as in the Christian theology

² Cf The references in the *Sankhya* and the *Gita*

They quote the current phrases, and dogmatically deny what is opposed to their rooted prejudice. They are thoughtless by habit, and accept another's opinion as final. If the ministers of the church stand up and ask the audience to think in a particular way, such people respond to it blindly without any choice of their own. But, if any of the congregation expresses a different view, the minister will stop him at once and say: "My friend, you must not think that way; it is not right. You are going against our belief, our faith". So the listener has to drop the idea of thinking. For, he is afraid of the eternal punishment in the hell. But those whose minds are enlightened and rational, find the idea of special creation hopelessly untrue to facts. Modern science has taught them that nothing is causeless and that there must be certain causes behind our appearance on this plane. In their search after truth, they try to discover the causes for it. The causes are not outside of us, because we are born and living. The causes must be within us. We are not forced by somebody else to come here, but, bound by law, we have come here. What has made us bound by law? It is our own selves, and we ourselves are the causes. Satan did not force us to come down here, nor did God. We are not such dependent creatures as we appear to be. We appear to be very dependent, though we enjoy a great deal of autonomy or independence. We have freedom to think, and give turn to our life as we wish. We can wish anything we like. None will force us to shun our desires. It means that we have to play our role. In fact, we ourselves create desires. Desires are great powers. They guide us, direct us, and inspire us to perform the acts, physical and mental.

For instance, you are planning today what you are going to do tomorrow, or at some future date. Early in the morning, you get up, take your breakfast, and do certain things, while at noon or night, you perform certain others. The whole round of the daily duties is all planned out by yourself. If you do not wish to do that, you can change right away. You may think that you are forced by the environmental conditions to do this, but, because you have accepted those conditions, you have proved yourself to be weak. You have acknowledged your weakness by accepting those environmental conditions which are debasing to your sense of dignity. If you have no

choice to tide over that undesirable situation, it is you who are ultimately responsible for it. If you have strength to change or leave those conditions, you can also do that. For instance, if you are engaged in any kind of professional work, you will have to go to the office, otherwise you will not get your salary. Now, if you are willing to sacrifice your salary, you will not have to do boring work. That is merely an illustration to show how we bind ourselves by our desires and how we weaken ourselves by them. So we cannot blame anybody else. If we have to blame anyone, we must blame ourselves. All our plans are fixed. As we live from day to day and fulfil our desires and tendencies, and as we build our future on this plane by our thoughts and deeds, so we did determine our life in the very beginning. We have come to this plane as a result of what we wanted before, and we shall continue to live in future still as we want our desired ends.

Now the purpose of our life on this earth is to gain experiences. We eat and drink and study our nature, internal and external, and gather certain experiences. We may run after wealth or fame, or do any work, or invent anything. But we are merely studying nature. Do not be proud that we have invented something very wonderful. It merely means that we have understood some laws of nature. Because nature has many laws.

Everything is governed by the inscrutable natural law, and the human beings are making efforts to know that law which is working and producing wonderful results. An inventor once told me after inventing a very complicated machine that after all it was nothing but a lump of iron. A wheel is placed in a certain relation with another wheel, and some power is put on it, and then it moves and produces a wonderful effect. But after all, what is it? It is the adjustment of some pieces or iron under certain laws, where the things work for definite results. So all these inventors have invented nothing in the end. They have simply studied the physical nature and its laws and that is all, and they gained certain experience, and have outlined that experience by putting a certain commercial value on it. But what does that commercial value amount to? It does not amount too much. It simply brings certain material results, and those results may last only for a short time, and

may give certain experiences and some kind of facility to certain things. For instance, the subway (underground railway) makes it possible for us to run a distance of three or four miles perhaps within three or four minutes, and it shortens the time and distance, and that is all. But it has not done anything else. It has given only that experience to us that a machine can be built to kill time and distance. We have learnt that lesson, and what next. Let the companies make gain, but the ordinary people have no interest in that. They simply have learnt this lesson from experience that it is possible to shorten time and distance. The ocean steamers give a certain lesson that there are powers by which we can conquer the waves. The wireless telegraphy has taught us the lesson that there is electricity in the atmosphere, and that electricity can convey our message. Then by putting aside all the commercial side of it, we have only gained this knowledge. But has the wireless telegraphy taught us our true Self? Has it taught us whether we are immortal or mortal and what will happen after death? No, it cannot. So are we going to remain on this plane of knowledge, and run after this commercial side which is the worthless side from the highest standard and sell our ideas? Now, if you have an idea in your mind, you can go to a bureau and sell it for \$10,000 and get that money by selling your idea. There are people who rob ideas, and steal ideas simply to make money. But money is nothing. It is just like earth, and it has no significance unless we put some value to it.

So, putting aside the commercial value, if we look at things scientifically, we find that they give us certain experiences. And it is a fact that all the objects of our senses give certain experiences, and the individual soul gathers those experiences. Now, why does it gather those experiences? They gather to utilize them to learn nature and to manifest certain powers that are latent in the soul. If that be the cause of our coming to this plane, then that cause will continue, until we have studied the whole of nature and gained all the experiences that can be gathered on every plane of existence. Already we have gone through the lower planes of existence like the minerals, the vegetables and the animals. The human plane is higher than those, because the human plane includes all other lower planes, and so we have learnt them. But on the human plane we have

not learnt everything yet, and, therefore, one life which is rushed by various desires and various acts and constant fight against the environmental conditions, is not sufficient to give us full experience which the soul requires, and, therefore, we will have to be born again after death. And so long as we think that each phenomenon is a separate thing by itself, we will have to study and gain experience. We will have to study the earth, nay, every portion of the earth, and thus we shall learn what it is like and what it is made of. We will have to study water, air, atoms, combinations of atoms, metals, and everything. Because each thing is separate, and we start from this diversity. When we begin to study nature, we start from diversity, and then gradually we go deeper and deeper. When we come to the atoms and the molecules, or to any force and energy, we begin to unify, but not until then. In fact, so long as we are on the surface, a piece of gold is not the same as a piece of silver or iron. It is different when we study the chemical side of it and the laws which govern the atoms and the molecules and also the forces that are working on each of these metals and each of these phenomena, but as force and matter, we see that they are one. Modern science tells us that all forces are nothing, but the manifestations of one stupendous energy. Forces like gravitation, electricity, heat, light, and motion come from one common source.

Now the nearest illustration is the electric car. There you see electricity produces motion of the car, the light and the heat, and other different things, only the difference is in degree. If we can see that under our eyes, we see there unity in diversity, that one electricity can appear as motion, heat, and light. Similarly the one force of nature appears as gravitation, heat, light, motion, earth, sun, moon, stars, and everything. We do not know now what that force is, but the higher and scientific knowledge reveals that there is unity, not on the surface, but deep below the surface, and that unity is more lasting than diversity, because you may stop the motion of the car, turn out the light, and stop the heat, but still there will be the electricity. These are the manifestations, and the manifestations are less lasting than the thing of which these are manifestations. The atoms and the molecules will last for ever, but the suns, moons and stars will vanish. They will be destroyed, and the earth

will also be destroyed. Similarly our bodies will be destroyed, and the forces will remain in the form of energy.

If we thus analyze this phenomenal universe, we find that as we go nearer to the source of energy, we come to unity. Starting from multiplicity, we go step by step towards oneness, because oneness is the goal. From one, many has come into existence, and the knowledge, by which we can understand that one substance, is supreme. You may call that substance anything you like, but that makes no difference. To know that substance is to understand the truth of nature.

When we study our own nature, we find that there are so many powers like emotions, senses, perceptions, thoughts, and ideas. But where do these come from? In fact, they are various phenomena that spring from a common source. You may not know that common source, yet it is your true Self and is one the supreme knowledge. You can analyze yourself in this way: you are a thinker, when you think; you are a seer, when you see; you are a listener, when you listen; when you question, you are an inquirer; when you hold anything, you are doing something different, and so on. Now all these powers are in yourself, and you are the one divine source which is doing all these things. Now who are you? That you do not know. But you ought to know that, because you yourself are the master. You let the hand move, and it moves; you let it stay in one place, and it stays; you eat, and digest your food, and if you would not want to digest, you would not digest and would have indigestion. So the mind has a tremendous power over body, and when you have indigestion, hold the thought that you will have good digestion, and you will have good digestion. These are facts, and you can experiment yourself.

But who are you in truth, you do not know. You do not also know that you existed before, and are going to exist afterwards. The fact is this that so long as this diversity of existence appears to be separate and distinct from everything else, we grope in the darkness of ignorance. It is not the right knowledge. Science also tells us that it is ignorance, and that ignorance is the cause of all these troubles, and, therefore, the Ruler of Death said: "He who sees diversity, instead of unity, goes from death of death". He has not gained experience enough yet, and so he will have to be born again and again,

in order to learn the highest knowledge, and the highest state of knowledge is that, in which that unity or one substance is revealed out, of which all these things have come into existence, and when that knowledge is gained, we know who we are and what we are.

In reality, we are not separate from that universal substance, and that universal substance is immortal. Death does not attack it, because death is only on the surface. For instance, when the sun will be destroyed, it will be dead, but the atoms and the molecules and the energy which make up the sun, will continue to exist in the universe. The body may go to pieces, but the universal substance, out of which the body is made, is birthless and deathless. So the substance, out of which our conscious entity is made, the intelligent thinker or self-conscious being who acts, thinks, and performs various works and desires, cannot die. Desires themselves may be dead. One desire rises and then goes down. Perhaps the desire which you had when you were five years old, does not exist now. It is dead and gone for ever, but you are not dead. Other desires have taken possession of you and have taken the place of that particular desire. So death does not attack anything which is below the surface of the phenomenal existence, and the Reality of the universe is beyond death. The Reality is always immortal, and changeless, and when we have realized ourselves as parts of that one stupendous substance which is by itself immortal and unchangeable, we have become deathless and immortal. We can rise above the realm of death only, by knowing our immortal nature. The realm of death extends so far as phenomena go, but when we come to the casual states, we come to the unity, and in that oneness there is no death.

As for example, many people are sitting in this place. Each one of us is a conscious entity, and each one has a particular physical condition and feature. Again two faces do not look alike; two eyes are not alike; two ears are not alike; and two mouths are not the same in shape and size, because they are diverse. But when we think of the conscious entity in each one of us, we will find there equality. One mind may be more intelligent than another; one mind may have certain desires which another may not have; one mind may be thinking of household duties, another of office work, another of his

or her personal affairs, but as the self-conscious entities, we are all the same. That is a relation we ordinarily do not see. In fact, we are like so many centres through which this conscious entity is manifesting its powers. If we can think of a conscious entity over our head and sending down rays into our brains and making each individual entity feel that it is a conscious entity, then we will understand the unity in variety. The sun may have innumerable rays, but they come from one common source. Similarly, all the conscious entities are but the rays of one big cosmic conscious entity, and being the parts of that cosmic conscious entity, we cannot be subject to death and birth if we know that. But if we do not know that and if we think of ourselves as separate and independent entities, we have come to gain experience and we do not see that unity which is behind all phenomena. We will go on gaining experiences of various kinds, until we come to that highest knowledge, and that knowledge will make us free from birth and death.

Now how that knowledge is to be gained? That higher knowledge of oneness cannot be gained by impure minds, impure intellects, and impure hearts. The mind, intellect and heart must be purified before we can gain that higher knowledge. Now, whose minds, hearts and intellects are not purified and are covered by dirt of desires, passions, hatred, jealousy and all earthly ambitions, they cannot see that oneness. If you see oneness in everything, you cannot be ambitious for that which you think as the highest, because you will feel that it is already in you. Such state of the mind kills all ambitions, and, therefore, God has no ambition. Christ never had any ambition, and Buddha never had any ambition.

It may frighten those who are on the plane of ordinary mortals as well as who are the slaves of ambition. They may say that if there be no ambition, I do not want to hear that philosophy, and I do not also care for that. Well, you may not care for that, but you will get a lesson. Because you are still on the surface, you do not see the unity, and so you are running after diversity. But you will have to come again and again before you learn and can appreciate it. That is not the fault of the Truth, and that is not the fault of the philosophy, but it is the fault of yourself, because you are not ready yet to see that oneness in everything. You see different things, and one

is smaller or bigger than another, and so you are ambitious to get the larger one and leave the smaller one. And when you see that from the minutest atom to the biggest sun, everything has come from that one source and the diversity disappears.

You may throw away one flower as very ugly, or one of a very unpleasant odour and another flower is very beautiful, but they have come from the common source. Your nostrils do not appreciate the odourless ones, or your eyes do not appreciate what other eyes may appreciate and call most beautiful. A beauty varies in every country according to the standard of the people, and so the ideals vary. What you may think as the highest and most beneficial thing in America, that may not be thought so in Europe and may not be beneficial at all to a man in China. He will think what a fool that American must be, and you may think the same of a Chinaman. But, in truth, both we are fools, and such is the world. We have not the power to appreciate the standards of others, and they have not the powers to appreciate our standards, and that is the way we are living ; and so long as we are living on this plane of diversity, we must have ambition. But there is a plane higher than that, and that is the plane of Divinity, where all ambitions cease to exist and all desires are fulfilled. After reaching that state we cannot live like a mortal slave of ambition. Because if you see oneness, how can you be jealous of another ? Then you will have a constant flow of love for everything.

Now what do you mean by love? Love means expression of oneness. When you feel that everything is one thing and light and darkness become one, why you love darkness just as much as you love light. So each has its beauty. You love the night just as much as the day. Night has its charm, and so day has also its charm. We have trained our minds to become one-sided, and, therefore, we see good in some things only and reject the rest. But a high-souled one who has seen the divine beauty of oneness, loves every living creature of the universe. Therefore there is no good or bad before his eyes ; there is no sinner or saint before his eyes, as he sees not the surface, and not the phenomena, but goes deep below the forms, and he sees the background and there his eyes are fixed.

You may see the face of an ugly man or an ugly woman, but behind that ugly face there is the glory of the Lord ; but

those who are fascinated by certain symmetrical faces, will call that ugly, but in the eyes of God there is nothing ugly. So which is reality, ugliness or that oneness? What appeals to us, to our inner soul, to our heart? That oneness, and, therefore, that is more lasting, and that is more divine while the other thing is on the surface, being temporary and delusive. Delusion proceeds from ignorance, and that ignorance is nothing but the knowledge of diversity and not of unity. Again knowledge of diversity of each separate thing proceeds from ignorance i.e. from the absence of right knowledge. But when we have understood that knowledge, we love everything and at that time we become immortal and have transcended death. So what shall we do? We should purify our hearts and souls, by putting aside all these things, by right discrimination and by being devoted to that one universal knowledge and by putting our minds away from diversity. Anything that will make us feel separate from each other, we must avoid for the sake of that oneness. That will help us and will purify our heart and soul, and then we shall be able to see that oneness. Then we shall see that one Being manifesting through many, and that will be the means by which we will transcend death, and will go to the realm of the immortals.

So we have understood what is meant by 'going from death to death', and those whose hearts and souls are not purified, will go from birth to death, and will be born again and again, until they have reached perfection. We know that evolution means change, and in this sense, we all are subject to evolution, because we are not perfect yet; but when we come to that knowledge of oneness, we have out-grown evolution. But it should be remembered that ultimate aim of evolution is to unify and to bring harmony to one end; and that is the goal of evolution which is known as perfection. Perfection must be one and unique and there cannot be many perfections. Perfection and realization of the one universal substance are one and the same, but ordinarily they appear as different. Perfection is the theme of philosophy and of all religions. Christianity also teaches that God is one, but it does not know what God is. Other religions also teach that God is one. But where is God? They say that God exists above the heavens. But, in truth, God is here and everywhere. They tell the truth, but unintelligently;

they do not let you think and find that one God exists in everything. They do not know the means and the way of getting this sublime knowledge. Christ alone knew it, but the Christians have forgotten it, because they are led astray by their peculiar ideas. Christ taught: "Ye shall know the Truth, and Truth shall make you free".¹ But where is that Truth, and how are you going to get it? You do not find it in the churches. All religions teach that one Truth, but they do not teach the nature of that Truth. It is Vedanta alone which tells you that that immortal, divine, deathless and birthless Truth or Being is not very far from you, but you are a part of that Being. See and realize Him in your own soul and in your own heart. You do not have to go into a temple or a church to find him, but your body is the temple. Christ said: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you". But we do not understand it. Vedanta will help you to understand that Truth which is one without the second.

Now, that Truth is within you, where does it lie, and how does it live. This true Self or the Divine essence dwells in the cave of the heart of every individual. Here heart includes all our internal functions like the mental functions, intellectual functions, emotions, volition, etc. All are included by the word 'heart'. Christ said: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God".² Therefore heart means inner nature, and in the centre of this inner nature, there shines the self or *Atman* which is small in size, perhaps about an inch of space you will find in the cave of our heart. That space is filled with the self-effulgent light, and there the *Atman* dwells. He is the Lord and the Master of all mental functions, sense powers, and sense organs together with the physical body. He governs everything. He is not separate from your true Self, but he is the same as the true Self. You are the master of your body and mind. You are the master of your sense organs and sense powers. You are the ruler of your past, present and future. Whatever you did in the past as well as enjoyed, suffered and experienced in the past, you have governed that; and whatever you will enjoy and suffer and experience in future, you will be the ruler of that also. And, therefore, you are the master and that master is the divine Self. When one realizes that Truth, one

¹ St John, VIII, 32

² St Matthew, V, 7

becomes free from fear of death, and then that soul gets enlightened, and past and future appear to him like the eternal present. In truth, there is no such thing as past and future. Anything that goes behind the curtains of our present state of consciousness, is either the past or future and that is all. But if that curtain is lifted, and there be one flow, there is no past and future. You can study your past, just as you are studying your present, if you have time enough. But you have not time to think of that, and, consequently, you do not think and know anything about it. Again you have no time to think about your future, and, consequently, the future is dark to you. Leave all the present things and go into your own room and think of your future. Then the curtain will be drawn up, and the realm of future will be open to you. Do not be rushed to death in the present, if you want to know the future, because this busy life shuts out everything.³

I have lived here long enough to know the American life. There is no word for the American life but busy, rush, and hustle. What does it amount to? I do not see any reason in it. They are running from early morning to midnight for something, but they do not know what they are running for. They think that it is a gain to them, but they are practically fooling themselves unconsciously. They never think of this; they never look inside, because they lack in the power of introspection. These American people cannot sit still for five minutes, as they get tired out and run to do something. They have tremendous activity and energy, but most of them are wasted to get material things. Of course, there are some solitary examples, who devote a little of their attention and try to understand their own nature. But their number is very small indeed. The ordinary people are afraid of everything. They are afraid of death, and also of their life, or everything, because they have not the strength. Why they would not have strength? Because they have no knowledge of themselves. When you know a thing, you go deep into the thing and go in the core of the thing, and you have mastered that thing, but so long as you do not know that thing deeply, you are afraid of it. The fear of death pro-

³ In fact, time is a category of the world of phenomena, and the world is ruled by nescience or *maya*. But in the Absolute, there is no *maya*, and, therefore, time does not exist there.

ceeds from ignorance, because you do not know what is meant by death and what will happen after death. The moment you know it, you are free from that fear, and, therefore, one, who knows that Ruler of the past and the future as well as of the body and the mind, who is dwelling in the centre of the heart (*angusthamatram purusam mahantam*), has become free from death. And that Ruler of the body, mind, intellect, and senses is immortal.

Advaita Vedanta says: "This is that" (*etadvai tat*). The Ruler of Death here answers the question: "What is immortal? What does not die?" That is, the contention of the Ruler of Death is this the ruler of your body and mind as well as of your past and future is dwelling in your heart, as the centre of your being, and that is immortal. In fact, each individual soul is a centre and that centre is immortal. It has its covering garments which are mortal. The centre is permanent, but the garments of the mind, mental functions, emotions, thoughts, and ideas, which cluster around that centre, are constantly changing like a kaleidoscope. It has been said that the centre is the permanent entity, just as your body is more permanent than the garments. Tomorrow you wear a red garment, and the next day you wear a blue or a green or a white one. These garments are changing constantly. Every spring you have a new fashion and your hats changed, feathers changed, and all your clothes changed, but your head continues to remain as the same. Similarly, as your body is the centre where all these different colours and customs cluster, so the Soul or the *Atman* is the centre which is more permanent. That immortal substance is more permanent, but these thoughts, ideas and desires are like your garments, which change as the fashion changes.

You take a new body, when new thoughts arise in you, and the old thoughts leave you. So you put on a new garment of the body in every birth. At this time we have come to this country. Perhaps, in our next birth we may go to some other planet. Who can tell it? We may not have this kind of body at all. We may have a watery or etherial body. That will be much better, for we will not have to bother with our clothes, if we have an etherial body. That will be a great relief.

The Ruler or Master of the body and the mind is luminous, without any smoke or cloud in it. There is no fog, no smoke,

and no cloud, but He is self-luminous. He is the Ruler of the past and the future. He exists today ; He will exist tomorrow, and He existed yesterday, and this is the immortal part in us. But we cannot see it, unless we have learnt to withdraw our minds from the diverse phenomena, or unless our mind is purified. Ordinary minds are scattered all over the world. Everything we see, we try to get hold of like an octopus, and try to get and possess it. As water, falling from a high mountain on a rock, scatters all over into small drops and sprays. If it constantly falls from a great height on a rock, it does not flow any more but it scatters off in all directions. So our mental functions have fallen on the hard rock of our self-consciousness, and have become scattered all over the world, and we cannot collect them. And that is the condition of the mind of an ordinary mortal which is scattered. But when that water falls upon any other mass of water, it falls in a constant flow, and it is no longer scattered, but it mixes with the ocean or with that water. So if our mind, instead of falling on the self-consciousness, goes toward the ocean of divine unity, then it will no longer be scattered ; it will be unified, and it will flow into the ocean, and become part of it. That would be the state when we would realize the oneness between ourselves and the Divinity, and then we will say: "I and my Father are one".

CHAPTER XIII

THE BODY AND THE SOUL

The Ruler of Death (Yama) compares the human body with a palace of the Emperor, and it is our true Self. The doors of that palace are the doors of the senses. There are eleven doors, and the sense powers are the door-keepers. The doors of senses like eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth etc. are seven in number. There are three in the body, including the navel, generating and excreting organs, and one in the centre of the brain. The seventh door is not known to ordinary mortals. It is known only to the Yogis, who are great seers of the absolute Truth. That door opens at the time of communion with the Infinite. It is closed to ordinary mortals, and so they do not know anything about it, which lies in the centre of the brain. So it is called in Sanskrit the *brahmarandhra*, i.e. the seat of the absolute Being.¹

And this palace belongs to the secondless Emperor who is our true Self. The Emperor, possessing intelligence, guides and directs all the attendants. The mind and intellect, the emotions and feelings, are mere attendants who are serving their Emperor, the true Self. The sense powers are like the door-keepers. They receive sensations and perceptions, when we come in contact with the external objects. These sensations, perceptions, and feelings are all presented as the offerings to the great king who is the ruler and governor in the palace. The light of intelligence which the king sheds, does not change, it is always the same. It is never crooked, but is straight. The minds of ordinary mortals are crooked, and it is very difficult

१। पुरमेकादशद्वारमजस्यावक्रचेतसः ।

अनुष्ठाय न शोचति विमुक्तश्च विमुच्यते । एतद्धैतत् ॥

—कठ उपनिषद्, २.२।१

Now, in ancient time, the seat of the *Atman* was conceived in a different way. In the *Upanishad* we find that the *Atman* resides in the heart, and the heart has been compared with a lotus. Next, the seat of the *Atman* was conceived in the middle of the eye-brows (*ajna-chakra*), and finally the brain was considered as the seat of the *Atman*.

to straighten them. They are crooked on account of the worldly desires or selfishness. The moment we become selfish, our mind is not straight, but is crooked, and those who are living on the plane of selfishness, are supremely crooked-minded. You cannot do anything with them. They have no straight-forwardness, no courage, and no strength of character. They are mean hypocritical, and have all kinds of sneaky ways. They never come forward like brave soldiers. But the king is made up of different stuff. Even in an ordinary mind, whose intellect is crooked, the king, the true Self, is always the same. The true Self is always straight-forward and perfect. There is no blemish or flaw that can tarnish his being. Now what is cause of the king's straight-forwardness and courage, because he is immortal and has transcended the limit as well as the fear of death.

By serving this king, one rises above the fear of death and transcends sorrow. So service of the king is necessary. But how are we to serve him. We can serve Him by constant remembrance of him. And there is no other way, by which we can serve the king, the ruler of this palace of the body. But if the ego begins to think of the king and begins to meditate upon him, that would be the best service the ego can render. And there is no other way of serving him.

You can meditate upon the king, the true Self. Now, what do you mean by meditation? Meditation means constant remembrance of the Ideal. The perfect and divine Self must be meditated upon as this Ideal, and be constantly thought of, and that constant thinking or meditation is the service. One, who does it, becomes eventually free from sorrow and grief, and ultimately attains to perfect freedom on this plane. Freedom is the emancipation of the soul from the bondages of selfishness, ignorance, desire, ambition, hatred, jealousy, and all earthly passions and tendencies. When we become free from these bondages in this life, we attain to perfection, and that perfection is what is meant by salvation (*moksha* or *mukti*) according to Vedanta. Those who attain to that knowledge, do not come back on this plane, and are not born again. Those who do not reach that state, will have to come back again and again to fulfil the earthly desires, which we deeply cherish. We will have to do them over again, because every time we do those things which we create by impressions. In fact, these acts leave impres-

sions upon our minds, and those impressions remain with us even when we are dead and gone, that is, even when the body perishes. And those impressions become the seeds of future desires and acts of similar nature.

Some people have an idea that salvation will begin in the life beyond death, no matter how we live in this life. They think that if we simply have faith in some doctrines or dogmas, we will attain salvation in the end. But that is not possible. Salvation must begin in this life. Perfection must be reached here, and when salvation is not reached here in this life, we cannot expect to have it after death. Therefore, we must strive hard to get it in this life, if we wish to attain to salvation or perfection after death.

So, that is a kind of service, and by that divine service like constant meditation and thinking of the king, the *Atman*, in the palace of this gross physical body, one can attain to freedom from sorrow and all other imperfections, as I have described, and after death such being does not come back to the plane of the mortals.

In each body you will find a king. He is the divinity or the divine spark within us. It is the same in every individual. The egos vary, the minds vary, the mental functions also are different, and intellectual functions are also of different degrees, but the true Self which is behind mind and intellect, always is the same everywhere. It exists not only in human beings, but also in all animals, in vegetables, in minerals, and in every atom and molecule of the universe. We can understand that universal Being, and when we realize our true Self which is beyond mind, intellect, and sense powers, we will be free from all bondages.

The all-pervading Self which dwells within us, dwells also in the sun. The sun does not here mean merely the material form of the particles of the matter, but that combination of the material particles which dwell in the infinite Being. Its life and soul are the infinite Being. The same infinite Being or the supreme Self dwells in the space, in the moon, in the stars, on this earth, in the fire, in the air, in the vegetables, minerals, and animals. Whatever we bring or enjoy and whatever we possess in this world of change, is pervaded by that supreme Self the Brahman. Ordinary mortals cannot see Him, because their

spiritual eyes are not open i.e. their spiritual eyes are covered by the veil of nescience or *maya*. We must not think that our physical eyes are the only eyes that we have. But we have a higher eye, and that is the spiritual eye. This supreme Being or Self cannot be perceived by the physical eye, nor by any of the sense powers which reveal the external and individual objects, but can be perceived by means of the spiritual vision (*prajna-chakshu*), which alone can reveal it.

Ordinary scientists may say: "Where is your supreme Spirit, why do not you see it?" They do not know that the true Self is beyond the reach of the sense powers. If they knew it as such, they would not have asked such questions. Though the sense powers exist in and through that true Self, yet they can never reveal it. Some people think: "Why, if there were such a thing as the soul, we could have intended some instruments and could have weighed it and got hold of it in some way". But that is not possible, because the Soul is finer than ether. It can go anywhere in no time. It is beyond time and space relations. It is so fine that ordinary minds cannot think of it, not to speak of their understanding it, or measuring it, or catching hold of it. It is born of eternal Truth, nay, it is the eternal Truth itself. It is vast, immutable, and indestructible. It is not many, but one. It is one without the second. This phenomenal universe is the kingdom of one universal Brahman. We may appear as many on account of the manifold manifestations, just as the rays of the sun may appear in various colours, but as all colours proceed from the rays of the sun, or as all sounds are, nothing but different degrees of vibration of the air, so all these egos in the mortal human beings in animals and minutest animalcules are nothing but the manifestations which are, in essence, the expressions of one absolute Brahman, or which are really pervaded by the absolute Brahman.

In the last chapter, I have described unity in diversity. We will have to see oneness behind multiplicity, and when we have seen that, we have realized God or the eternal Brahman.¹ In

¹ There is a seeming difference between the absolute Brahman and God, but, in truth, they are one and the same. The absolute Brahman is the indeterminate transcendent Brahman, whereas God is the immanent determinate Brahman.

other words, it means we have realized God. But it is the most difficult task to perform. Nevertheless this should be our ideal.

Now, incoming and outgoing movements of the breath (*shvasa* and *prashvasa*) are not the only means of our existence. Breath is not the only means by which the mortals live on this plane. Breath (*prana*) is not also the same as the true Spirit. True Spirit is something different from it. In the Jewish religion, you will find in the Old Testament the saying: "God breathed the breath of air into his nostrils and he became a living Soul". That gives an idea that breath is the same thing as the supreme Soul, and in the book of Job, you will find that the breath comes from the Almighty. In fact, the Jewish religion of ancient times did not believe in the existence of the soul as separate from the breath, and there were old and superstitious people in different countries who had the same belief. The old Jewish belief was that breath comes from God, and after death it goes back to God. It is true as much of the human beings, as of the animals, and there remains nothing after death. That was their idea. But, in India, you will find that the great seers of Truth rose far above that conception. They realized the true nature of the supreme Soul as distinct from breath, and declared it as such in unequivocal terms. So you will find in this passage the explanation of that incoming and outgoing breath is not the same thing as the soul, but the soul dwells in the midst of all the aspirations and inspirations, and all the senses and sense powers worship that Being who dwells in the midst of our being.

Breath may stop, but still soul continues to exist. The departed spirit does not breathe, yet it lives. So breath does not mean the same thing as the soul. Even in our life-time we can stop the inspiration and respiration, say, for a few seconds, or a few minutes. We do not die at that time. There are Yogis in India, who can stop breathing for days and for weeks, still they do not die. So the breathing process is not the same thing as soul, but the breathing process is caused by a certain force, and that force or power dwells in the soul. It is the soul that possesses that power, and makes the organs breathe. On this plane the soul manifests that power. That power is called the power of the *prana*. It is the life-force or vital force, its outward expression. When it manifests through the nerves, the

nerve centers and the lungs, the external symptom is found in the respiratory process. But the power of the *prana* or the life-force which causes the lungs as well as the diaphragm to move, is in the soul, and it is not in the body. It is not merely a mechanical process, but behind the mechanical process, there is a power. Ordinary anatomists or physiologists, who do not know the secret, do not understand that power, and, therefore, deny its existence.

But when the king or the soul departs from this palace, or leaves it, what happens then? At the time of death all the attendants and servants follow him, and leave the body. Just as when a queen bee leaves the hive, all drones and other bees will follow her and the hive will be empty. In the same manner, when the king goes out of this palace, or deserts it, all the attendants like sense powers, mental powers, intellectual powers and vital powers follow the king and leave the palace too. It is then said that the man is dead. Therefore death means that state when the king of the palace and his attendants have deserted it.

Here we must not forget that this body is not the same as the soul, and we must also remember that the soul is not the result of the mechanical process or activities of the organs of this physical body. The materialistic theory or the theory of the Agnostics hold that the soul is the result of the combination of the matter and the material forces, governed by the mechanical laws. But it is a logical blunder. How can a combination of matter produce such a thing as all-conscious soul? Who has made that combination? There are different organs in the system. Now, these organs are put together, each being assigned to its proper place. Now it can be asked that who has put them together? The combination itself cannot put them together. Take a man-made machine, and there you will find different wheels and different parts of the machine. Now, those parts, if you put them in a lump, would not join and combine and reach their proper places and form a perfect machine. It requires an intelligent hand to put those different parts in their proper places, and then the power will come through it. So a machine may run mechanically, but it must be put together first. Now who has put together the different parts of the machine of the human body? That question has never been answered by materialistic thinkers who deny the existence of the soul as a separate

entity. On the contrary, they beg the question by stating that the combination has put the different parts together, as if the combination itself is a living substance and intelligent something which existed before the parts were combined or the parts were put together. No rational thinker can, however, accept such approach as scientific

The organic functions may be described as mechanical to a certain extent, but beyond a certain point they are no longer mechanical. They are also governed by laws, and they are directed and guided by some intelligent force. You may describe the process of digestion, for instance, that after you have eaten some thing, it goes down the alimentary canal, and falls into the stomach mechanically, and then the secretions come, and digestion goes on. But why shall the secretions come, and why shall digestion go on? It is not food that produces the secretion that draws it mechanically. If it did, then nobody would have any disturbance or indigestion, if any of the organs be deranged. But who cures them and who makes the organs in perfect condition? It is the soul or the *Atman* who has created these organs. The body is created by the soul. For an illustration, take an oyster. Some person may think that the shell of an oyster has been created by somebody else outside of the oyster, and the shell is the cause of the oyster. But that idea is foolish. If any person thinks that the shell is the cause of the oyster, as the bark of the tree is the cause of the latter, that would be a ridiculous statement. And all materialistic thinkers are doing the same way. They put the cart before the horse, and delude the people. But the real argument would be that the oyster creates its own shell, and lives there. As a crab creates a shell, so the soul creates the body with its most intricate organism, and lives there. The whole nervous system like the brain and the nerves is manufactured by the soul. The soul has the power to manufacture in this way, and then it lives there. Why does it do so? It does to fulfil a certain purpose, and also to gain a certain experience and to enjoy and realize the results of its own thoughts and deeds; and when that purpose, for which it has manufactured the particular form, is fulfilled, it leaves it. The king then departs, and takes all the attendants with him. The soul is the king, which departs and exists even after death.

Death means only the throwing away of the garment of the old body. Just as we throw away the old garments and put on new clothes, so the soul throws away the old garment of the body, after fulfilling a certain purpose, and then puts on another garment,² manufacturing another form. But what form does it manufacture? That form would be the result of its own thoughts and deeds. The king does not like to live in a palace which would not harmonize with the thoughts, ideas, and desires which the king possesses. All desires that we have and all the thoughts and ideas that we cherish, will remain with us, but everything else we will have to leave. The sense organs we cannot take with us, but we will take the power, by which we can draw from the environments particles of atoms and manufacture the organs like the organ of hearing, organ of sight and organ of smell, brain and nervous system. From one minute particle all this beautiful system will come out just by cellular development. But a cell divides, because it is a living cell. If it were a dead cell, it would not divide, and it would not produce any organ. So that minute substance or etherial particle, which possesses such a wonderful power, is indestructible. It exits after death, and manufactures other forms, just in the same way as it has manufactured the present form.

When we really understand this point that which is separate from the body and yet dwells in the body, and leaves at the time of death, and carries all the attendants with it at the time of death, we have understood our true nature, and then only we have conquered death. Then there is no fear that death can affect us in any way, because we fear what we do not know. But when we know a thing, we are no longer afraid of it, and we know the different ways, and we find the means by which we can get rid of it.

In India, you will notice that there are persons who have conquered death during their lifetime, and there are instances, where the Yogis could throw away their body voluntarily, not

२ (क) वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपरानि ।

तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णान्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥

—भगवद् गीता २।२२

(ख) योनिमन्ये प्रपद्यते शरीरत्वाय देहिनः ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।२।७

by committing suicide, but by consciously giving up the body. They will sit in *samadhi*, go into this state of superconsciousness, and withdraw all the powers from the different organs, and leave the body just as a crab would leave its shell, or as a snake sheds its old skin, and throws it off. And so the soul stands outside of it, and leaves the body, letting everybody known beforehand that he is going consciously to pass out at such and such a time and under such conditions, without having any fear, but with supreme joy at heart that he has fulfilled the mission of his life. But who can do that? Only a realized man can follow this course. When one can separate himself from the shell of this physical body, it means that he has really conquered death.

We do not need to conquer death by holding on to some superstitious idea, or the doctrine, or the method. Study the Raja Yoga, and there you will find the scientific process, by which you can withdraw yourself from the body, and conquer death. You can conquer death not by false belief or faith in some object, or some being, or getting hold of some queer idea. That way is not healthy, nor is that rational. But if you can withdraw yourself from the sense organs and the body, and can stand like a witness outside of it, you have conquered death. Nobody can kill you then.

The *Bhagavad Gita* says: "The fire cannot burn you, the air cannot dry you, water cannot moisten you, swords cannot pierce you,³ you are indestructible, immortal. When the body is cut into pieces, that will not hurt you (the soul). When that kind of knowledge (*atmajnana*) will come, you will be able to conquer death, not by going into the grave but living even in this phenomenal world. Why should we be fool ourselves? We must proceed step by step and inch by inch and try to devote our life. We know that everything will end in death, so we should conquer death first. What is the use of doing other things besides this, if we have not conquered death? What is the use of doing other things? It is only a kind of delusion that by doing all these works and imagin-

३। नैनं क्लिबन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।

न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥—भगवद् गीता २।२३

ing all these things, we will be happy. But happiness comes to a man who has conquered death, or who has no fear of death. Some do not like to see a dead body and do not also like to think of any dead relative, because they are frightened. The man of business who may be of great wealth and intellect, when he finds any relative passing away, will get nervous prostration, would not be able to eat anything to attend to his business, and would not know what to do, because that horror comes, and he thinks: 'I am doing all these things and to what end? Everything will be swept away at the door of death.' So the first duty which a sensible man or woman must perform, is to overcome the fear of death by separating himself or herself from this gross material body and conquering death.

That is the advice which the Ruler of Death, Yama, gives to Nachiketa who went to the abode of death, and asked three vital questions. Yama also shows him the method by which it can be done. But very few can follow this, because they are too active, and are too much distracted by surface attractions of this phenomenal world. When we enjoy the beautiful colouring or nice music, we forget death for the time being. It is true that it is very beautiful, but we can enjoy a larger and more lasting beauty, when we have overcome the fear of death. When we know that we are not going to die, but we are immortal, everything we will enjoy a thousand times, perhaps a million times more than we do now. That is the most wonderful part, and no one can disprove it. So, if we wish to enjoy life, first of all we will have to overcome the fear of death, and then we will live in the world like an immortal soul, without being anxious for anything that is related only to the surface. Think of what you can take with you at the time of death. You will not be annihilated or destroyed, and you will not be reduced to nothingness. If we could, it would be much better, but we are bound by laws. The laws would not let us go into nothingness, because something cannot be reduced to nothing. If we exist today, we shall have to exist in the future too. Existence can never become non-existence. That is one of the laws of nature. And so those who are deluding themselves, thinking that after death nothing will remain, enjoy their life here and now, without thinking of what will happen after death. We can ignore for sometime the question

of our future existence, but we cannot evade it for all time. We are in a phenomenal world and we are fettered by some laws as rigid and inexorable as getting burnt, if we put our finger into fire. It is exactly like that. You may do anything you like, but every action will bring in its train an inevitable reaction which you will have to reap willingly or unwillingly. The reaction will be good or bad according to the nature of your own thought and action. The laws of compensation, of retribution, of causation and of action and reaction, are inexorable and can hardly be avoided. And that something cannot be reduced to nothing is another law of nature.

Now what continues to exist after departing this palace of the body, is the soul. That is an immortal part in us. A man does not live by inspiration, nor by respiration of breath alone, but there is something more in him, which guides and directs this inspiration and respiration of breath. By the help of that we are all alive. But what is that power? We will have to find it out in our selves. No science will teach us that secret, but we will have to study our own selves to find that out. Science can only describe the process by which these organic functions are performed, and that is all. But what is that power and where does it lie? Science does not know anything about it. Physiology, anatomy, and biology will not tell you anything about it, even though you spend your lifetime on it. They are all guessing, when they come to that point, because it is beyond their sense perception. They are absolutely in the dark. They have certain theories, and make a hypothesis, and may say that it must be so and so. Another man says that it must be this, while the third man says that it is not this, but that thing. And that is exactly what they are doing all the time. It has merit in it no doubt, but we should also try to proceed deeper than it. When we correctly analyze science, we find that science is within the realm of gross senses. That which we can perceive by sense powers, can be described in a systematic way. Science does it, but there is a point beyond, which science cannot guide us. Shall we then stop there, simply because science fails to penetrate further, or shall we undertake the task of proceeding still further by some new means? Obviously the latter course is attractive to the more adventurous aspirants after truth. That is why we need cultivate and sharpen our

intellect by concentration or inward thinking which will enable us to discover the truth for ourselves. And that is necessary. So those who have already studied science, should now devote their time in studying their own nature, in concentrating their own minds, in meditating upon the king in the palace of the gross physical body, and to find out by what power we are living. Stop your inspiration and respiration, if you can, and then try to discover, if there is a power in you, which is the cause of your respiratory process. Control the power of breathing process, and see what force is behind it. You will not be dead, but just do it gradually. You do not have to go to any laboratory to find that out. But your own body will be your laboratory. Only watch carefully what happens, and study inch by inch that power of the *prana* or life-force which sustains you. Then you will see how the life-force is expressing itself in every minute atom and molecule. You will then know there is no such thing as dead matter. Then you would not need any further proof or evidence. Ordinary people say: "What proof is there that there is such a thing as soul power?" Your proof is your own self, and that is the best and the most convincing proof. At that time you need not ask that question, when you have found it. Therefore that by which we are called living and intelligent beings, is in our soul. The soul possesses that. The soul combine all these material particles, puts the organs in their proper places, and produces a perfect harmony. No man-made machine can be more perfect than the human machine. It is the most intricate and perfect machine that you can imagine, and the soul has the power to produce it. If you are in perfect health, you will see what a wonderful harmony there is. But when you are abusing it, you are wrong from beginning to end, and, consequently, you are suffering, you have ill health, and you have a diseased mind or diseased intellect—everything is diseased. Disease means *disease* i.e. *not ease* or *no happiness*. All is trouble and anxiety. Everything is upset. And, therefore, get back to your simple nature, and leave all these artificial thoughts and deeds; reduce yourself to your simplest natural way; and come back to yourself and find out how glorious it is. Then you will see the harmony, and will understand what soul does. We have become too artificial, no wonder that we should deny the exis-

tence of soul. Our soul is in dollars and cents, and in greenbacks there is our soul. We put it outside in the pocket-book, and protect it, and if anyone takes it away, we have lost our soul. No wonder that we have been living in a miserable and deluded way, making fools of ourselves. Let us use our common sense which God has given. Common sense does not mean that we must eat and drink and enjoy life in a foolish way, but common sense will tell us to come to our natural state, bring about absolute harmony of mind and body, and understand our true self, and see what force or power is making all these things. Our common sense will help us in doing that, and then we make the best use of that sense, for we expect that God will be revealed to us. Otherwise, when we do not understand our self, which is the nearest, how can we understand God. When we do not understand the finite thing like this body, or our mind, or the power which is keeping the body, we expect to see God, who is infinite, vast, and beyond everything. That is not possible. Therefore Vedanta teaches first of all to know yourself. Start from that, and then everything will be known, and not until then. You cannot know the infinite Self, until and unless you know your finite self. If you do the opposite, it will be the wrong and round-about way. You cannot know God without knowing yourself. When you know your own immortal nature, then you have a right to know God and not until then. So, first of all we should try to know ourselves, to separate ourselves from this gross body, and to conquer death, and then we shall be able to know God and to enjoy everlasting happiness and eternal life. That eternal life will begin here on this plane first, and everything else will come afterwards.

CHAPTER XIV

PERFECTION TO THE SOUL

We remember the question which was asked by Nachiketa, the young seeker after truth, who went to the abode of Death and visited the Ruler of Death: “*yeyam prete vicikitsa manushye, astityeke nayamastiti chaika*”, i.e. there is this doubt—when a man dies, some people say that he is dead and gone forever, while others believe that he still continues to live—which of these is true?

We have been listening so long to the various questions, concerning the true nature of the soul and its condition after death, and here the Ruler of Death touches that particular point which the seeker after truth wanted to know. He says: “Now I shall tell you the most secret and greatest of all secrets, by knowing which one attains to the highest truth, and becomes immortal. But those who do not know it, come again on this plane of existence, and are born again”. Here the Ruler of Death refers to that law of reincarnation or transmigration, as it was understood and explained by certain thinkers; but in Vedanta, the idea of reincarnation has been considered to be most scientific and rational, and this is one of the oldest expressions of this idea. Some people believe that in the Vedas, there is no mention of the idea of reincarnation, but here we find that it has been described very clearly, as also in other *Upanishads* and other writings. And then he goes on to describe that secret. He says: “Those who do not understand the eternal and immortal truth, the Self, are subject to the law of reincarnation or the law of evolution; but when that truth is realized, the knower of that truth transcends all laws. He is no longer subject to reincarnation, nor to evolution; and he reaches the goal of reincarnation or rebirth and also of evolution”.¹

१। यस्त्वविज्ञानवान् भवत्यमनस्कः सदाशुचिः ।

न स तत्पदमाप्नोति संसारं चाधिगच्छति ॥

यस्तु विज्ञानवान् भवति समनस्कः सदा शुचिः ।

स तु तत् पदमाप्नोति यस्माद्भूयो न जायते ॥—कठ उपनिषद् १।३।७-८

In order to understand this clearly, we have to know first why we have come to this world and why we are living this way, and under what laws we are working, and what laws are governing us. We have come to this world to fulfil a certain purpose. We are born with certain powers. The desires have been our motive powers, incentives for all the works that we are performing during our life-time. If we had no desires, we could not have accomplished anything; we would have been like stocks or stones, like a chair or a table. The desires make us human beings. Even lower animals have not the ability to express all their desires although they may have desires in a very limited form. Their desires are merely for sense objects, food and drink, etc. But human desires are different from mere animal desires of senses like hunger, thirst, and procreation. In fact, the human desires are multifarious. We are desiring all the time, and we cannot stop our desires. If we try to stop, we fail. Again all our desires are not fulfilled. If we can imagine a time when all our desires, physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual, are fulfilled, then there would be an end of our earthly existence too. In other words, nothing will remain to be accomplished at the time when we reach perfection.

Perfection means the fulfilment of all desires, and that means the attainment of the highest goal, the *Atman*. When the highest goal is reached, there is no other desire left unfulfilled. But so long as we are living on the mortal plane, i.e. on the plane of relativity and imperfection, we are full of desires and those desires are never fully gratified. We try to gratify them once, but again they rise, and we cannot stop their recurring course. That is our earthly existence. If we examine our lives, we shall find that it is so. Day after day we are eating and drinking and sleeping and enjoying the pleasures, but still there is no end of the process. The more we eat and drink and enjoy, the more we have such desires, and when that end comes, does it come with death? Death may attack this body, and we may have to give up this body, but the desires are not in the body, but they are deeper. They are rooted in the mind, nay, they are in our being, and they exist so long as our own being, or soul-life, will continue to exist. If we could annihilate our being or soul-life at

death, then it would have been possible to be free from all desires. But we cannot do so. It is absolutely impossible to get rid of our own being, because being can never become non-being. That is the law of nature. Existence can never become non-existence. If we exist today, we shall have to continue to exist for ever.

If existence could be made into non-existence, the whole world would vanish, and it would not exist. There would be no law and reality. It is one of the fundamental truths of nature that existence can never become non-existence, and that is one of the greatest proofs of our immortality. Because we exist today, therefore, by the law of nature, we shall continue to exist. But it can be asked as to in what form we shall exist. So it can be said that we shall exist in the same form as we are now. We may not have the body, but body is only an outgrowth of the desires of the mental condition of the germ of life. We shall continue to exist as the germ of life, or as an entity, or a consciousness entity, and we shall carry our desires with us.

If we understand that the desires are the causes which have produced our birth on this plane, and desires have kept us alive and we are by our thoughts and deeds fulfilling some of our desires and some of our purposes of earthly existence, we have understood why we have come to this world and where we are going. In fact, we have come to this phenomenal world to fulfil a certain purpose as well as to gain certain experiences, and we are going to do the same until we have gained all experiences and fulfilled all desires. Now if we are the creatures of our own desires, we will notice one thing that in the teachings of the Vedanta philosophy, we neither blame the Creator, nor the Satan, nor the parents, for our earthly conditions. We do not blame anyone. There is the one-birth theory which some of the religionists like Christian theologians and others believe, and according to which, God creates our souls right at the time of birth, that we come into existence all of a sudden, and then continue to exist for ever, and go through all sufferings, pains, and enjoyments. If this theory be true, then comes the question: who creates all these inequalities and diversities, why should God make one happy and another unhappy, and why should one

find all favourable conditions and another unfavourable conditions? What are the causes? If God makes them all so different, then He is responsible for all our sufferings and misery, and then we blame God. Then those who believe that Satan interferes with God's creation, and tempts us, and makes us do all kinds of wrong deeds, put up another object whom we blame in the end. Those who believe in heredity, blame their parents and grandparents, who are responsible and brought us into this world, and so they are the objects of blame. But all these are not true. We take the whole burden of blame upon ourselves, and we do not curse God, we do not blame the Satan, nor do we curse our parents. We are governed by the law of cause and sequence. This law is called in this philosophy the law of *karma*. This law is very irresistible and inexorable, and no one can avoid this law. It has been said before that it does not stop for orphan's cries, nor for widow's tears. Whether we wail or cry, this law does not stop for us. No matter how we deny its existence, it continues to go on. So the law of cause and sequence continues right on, whether we believe in it or not. If we deny the law of gravitation, that denial would not make the law non-existent, but we would still be attracted towards the centre of the earth. Every atom of our physical form will be attracted towards one another, otherwise we would not have the shape of the body. The body is in its proper shape, and why? It becomes possible for the law of gravitation, and nothing else. Again it can be asked as to why do we exist on this plane, and why are we not thrown off into infinite space. To this it can be said because of the law of gravitation. You may deny that there is any such thing as the law of gravitation. Still you cannot step off, and you will have to stay, and this would be the greatest proof of this law which is invisible and irresistible. The human belief would not change it. The Christian Scientist may try to deny the law of gravitation. But he would not succeed, and there he would fail. His mind is not more powerful than this law of gravitation. Similarly the law of *karma*, whether we know it or not, we are governed by it. If we put our finger into the fire, it will be burned and that is the law. Every action must produce a reaction of similar nature, and that is the law. If the action is good, then the reaction will

also be good. And all the results we get unexpectedly, we call accidents. But in fact there is no such thing as an accident in this world. We call it an accident, but it is governed by some unknown law. Again there is no such thing as absolute chance, but there reigns some unknown law which is operating in nature and which human minds have not yet understood. That is the meaning of chance or accident. Now, if we find suddenly any misfortune coming to us and we cannot trace the cause of it in this life, we must not think it is an accident, because if we say it is an accident, we simply betray our own ignorance that we do not know the law. There is nothing which happens in this universe, and is not governed by some kind of law, whether we know it or not. Now all our present conditions are more or less the results of what we were before.

In the law of cause and sequence, if one person performs an act, the result of that act will not go to another person, but to the actor himself. That thing we must understand. If the parents have committed some wrong, then the wrong of the parents will not be suffered or followed by the children of those parents. There is a statement in the Old Testament that the sins of the fathers go to the third and fourth generations, but that is only a very crude way of expressing that there is similarity. But although we find that certain sins are transmitted amongst children, still if we go deeper and find that the souls of those children deserved such conditions, otherwise they would not come to such conditions. Like attracts like, and, therefore, they have come under those conditions, and they are the sufferers. Transmission is only the physical condition. The law governs just the same, and if we are suffering, if we are miserable, that misery or suffering should be considered as the result or reaction of those actions which proceeded from ourselves in the past; and all the reactions that will come to us in future, will be the result of all the thoughts and deeds of our present. And if we understand this law very clearly, then there would be no difficulty in understanding the law of re-incarnation or rebirth. There are various conditions which modify or which affect our manifestations. The law of rebirth is a very complex law. It is not a simple law, because there are so many laws which come together, and act upon one another, and, therefore, we cannot understand properly, and

also we cannot differentiate and distinguish how far heredity goes, and where the law of *karma* begins. There is some truth in heredity, as far as the channel of manifestation is concerned. If water flows through a certain bed, say of a certain colour, red or yellow or black, it takes the colouring. The water takes its colouring from the bed, and carries some minute particles with it. So the parents are nothing but the channels through which the reincarnating souls manifest on this plane. They take the symptoms of the channels through which they manifest.

Now it can be asked why will certain souls come to certain channels, and other souls go to other channels. What determines that? This is the most mysterious problem. This problem has not been solved yet in the Western world. No scientist or philosopher has succeeded in solving this problem. No theory in Christendom has explained this point very clearly and satisfactorily. But here, in the Vedanta philosophy, we find this explanation that the law of *karma* determines it. That is, each one will go through the channel which it deserves, and to which it is drawn by its natural tendency. And here we may apply the law that like attracts like. Certain souls which need certain experiences, will go under certain conditions, and those conditions must be exactly the ones which would bring about certain experiences. Or, in other words, the souls which need a certain experience, will find their proper environmental conditions, proper environments and parents. All the conditions of life are nothing but the environments, and the soul is the entity which brings with it the desires, tendencies and other qualities like character, etc.

What will become of them, who have gained experience on this plane? They will go to higher planes. This is not the only plane of existence. There are other planes, and they will go there. Then in course of our gradual progress, we may go upward, then temporarily we may go downward again. Here we must understand clearly that all minds are in the way of formation. When we rise on the crest of a wave, we are about to go down for a little while. Then we go up again. Now, if we understand this law that we are going up, but in the form of a wave and that going down will be the result of certain deeds, or of misunderstandings, or of ignorance, or of

selfishness, then we shall be alert. We may not do things correctly and we may not understand things properly, and, therefore, we may commit some mistakes, then we go down; but we go down to rise up again. We do not go down to stay there, but by the force of our individual nature, we will rise up again, and go still higher. And, in this way, we march onward toward the ultimate goal of evolution which is perfection. And when that perfection is reached, we are free from the law or process of evolution. And if we have certain desires of an early nature, which can only be fulfilled and satisfied on this human plane, we ought not to blame anyone, if the same desires bring us back again. Do you know how many times you came before? You have come many times in this world of desires. And so this is not the first time you have come. You do not remember them. Every time you come, you come anew, as if for the first time. This is the delusive aspect of the phenomenal nature which you forget. If you did not forget, it would have been, perhaps, the most miserable and undesirable state. But it is a blessing that you forget, and you begin with fresh energy, force, and ideas, as if you have come for the first time into this world. But still there are persons who have glimpses of their past, and intuitively they are conscious of their past experiences. If you study the case of prodigies and the wonderful powers which they manifest suddenly from their childhood or youth, you wonder how they could do these things without gaining experience in their previous lives. Suppose a girl of five years of age begins to play the piano like a master. What would you think of her? She had no time to learn in this incarnation—perhaps her parents never played—that is a wonderful manifestation. So it should be remembered that nothing is lost in the world. What we have gained in this life, will not be lost, but it will continue to exist with us always. We may not come down here immediately, or we may have to wait for the favourable conditions for a long time before we take our rebirth. Because the conditions are not always ready. In time, they will come, and if we are not attracted to the present conditions, we will have to wait until proper conditions arise. So those things should be considered, and, therefore the problem of death, or what happens after death, is the most complex, and difficult problem. It is not a simple problem.

Some spiritualistic mediums, after communicating with certain spirits, may think: why do the departed souls exist in the spirit world and why they are not reincarnated, and, therefore, the theory of reincarnation must be untrue. No, they may remain earth-bound for sometime and communicate with the mortals for hundreds of years, and then they may reincarnate. How do you know that they would not reincarnate? They do not say that. I mixed with the spiritualists, and lectured for them in their summer camps, and when I was lecturing on the theory of reincarnation, some of the mediums came, and shook hands with me, and said that their spirit-guides taught them exactly the same thing which I said in my lectures about reincarnation, while other mediums came to me, and said that my theories were all wrong, and I accepted both statements as true, because it depended upon the knowledge of their spirit-guides. Their guides were not perfect. Some guides knew this law and explained it, and others did not. Those who are born and brought up with the idea of one-birth theory, for instance, that God creates the souls at the time of birth and they will continue to exist for ever, will give that knowledge, because it is the impression (*samashkara*) they carry after death, and that impression is communicated in a certain way, and that is all. But we must remember that all those who depart after death, are not of equal character or of equal experience, or of equal knowledge. There is just as much variety after death as on this plane of existence. There are idiots, and there are wise ones, after death. In fact, we carry with us what we have gained in this life, and nothing more and nothing less.

This is a peculiar world. This is a mysterious world. The laws of this world are very rigid, and there is no bargaining. If it were possible for an ignorant, selfish, and weak man to become an angel right after death, this world would have been different. But it is not so. Just as far as we have advanced in our progress, there we remain after death. We cannot jump immediately after death and enter into heaven. These laws have not been understood by those who are following certain doctrines and dogmas and beliefs, or some of tradition, or some book of authority. They have not understood the laws. But those seekers after truth who, disregarding all authority of books and personalities, made rational investigations, discovered these

higher truths, and gave them to the world what they experienced and understood, without thinking whether their opinions or ideas would be appreciated or not. They did not care for that. They did not give these truths for name and fame, but they did it just for love. In fact, they did not give their names even, and in these writings, the truth came as if from impersonal sources. The vedic truths came to the world like inspirations. Through whom these truths came, nobody knows. Their names are sometimes given and sometimes not. When they lived, we do not know. Some of these names are poetic names, and not real names.

And, therefore, Yama says that all our works produce impressions, and those impressions are the causes of our desires, and those desires are the seeds of our future work. Now when we eat something new or drink something for the first time, it creates an impression upon our subtle body, or ethical being, or mind substance, and that impression is stamped and forms the seed of future desire. We may want that same thing again in future i.e. after ten years, or five years, or after five days. If the impression be of a painful nature, we do not want it, and we try to avoid it; and if that impression be of a pleasant nature, we seek it, and long for it, and try to enjoy it. So the desires are produced by these impressions, and these desires are the causes of all works, mental and physical.

Each one of us can find out the causes that have built up the individual character or nature. We have made ourselves what we are today by our thoughts and desires. The parents might have objected or desired us to do certain things, or our guardians of the schools and the colleges might have wanted us to do certain things, but we could not resist that irresistible force of our inward nature or tendency. And, therefore, it is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* that each individual is propelled by his inward nature to do the things which he or she is doing. In spite of all the resisting influences we go on doing the same thing, when our nature is stronger than the resisting powers. Churches may hold before our eyes moral ideas, but if our tendencies or nature be wicked, it would not help. It would be like crying in the wilderness. We would laugh at them, and they would not appeal to us. And that is the reason. It is the inward tendency, and see how natural it is. We cannot graft a moral nature on to a wicked one and make it moral. That is

not possible. We may give ideas, but we cannot give the brain. The brain will come through the gradual process of evolution. And this evolution begins inside Just as the evolution of a tree begins inside first, and not from the barks, so the inward subtle mental forms begin to evolve first, and thereafter they create the gross material forms So if we understand our subtle form and the causes which mould our character, then perhaps we can do things, or live in such a way as would enable us to be better in future and not as worse than we are now.

So all the works, thoughts, and deeds of one life produce as their resultant, the future of the individual, and this will determine the condition or stage of development, whether it is higher or lower. If we go lower for the time being, we shall rise higher again in order to reach perfection. Each individual will reach the same goal in the end, sooner or later. In fact, each soul will become perfect in the end, because it is the law of nature. It should be remembered that evolution ends in perfection, otherwise there would be no necessity of having such evolution As an evolution has a beginning, so it has an end. It will not, therefore, run eternally. Some of the materialists and modern evolutionists do not understand this. Of course, some of them do, like John Fiske and others who understand that the purpose of evolution is perfection; but the materialistic evolutionists do not understand the purpose They think that it is mechanical and is going on just like a machine without any purpose. We must not follow their ideas or theories, because they have not gone far enough.

That knowledge which we have acquired, will help us in moulding our nature in future. And the bodies we get, are also determined by our knowledge, thoughts, experiences, and deeds. If we injure others, we will suffer, and as a result of this suffering, we may be born as cripples, etc Therefore, we must not injure anyone. If we cheat others, we will also be cheated. No one can cheat another without cheating himself, and that is the most wonderful law. We may think that we are cheating others, but we are not. We may tell lies apparently to save something, but we have done more harm, and have lost a great deal, because we are self-deluded The law of compensation works in every minute detail. When we gain physically, we have lost perhaps spiritually or mentally or intellectually. So

destroyed, and it continues to live, even when the material body is dead and gone. Ordinary people may not know or realize it; they may doubt its existence, but the very fact that they doubt its existence shows that it is the background of their own self or existence. Suppose a man says that he has no tongue, but the very statement that he has no tongue presupposes his tongue, otherwise he could not have talked. So that, by which we deny the existence of soul, is our soul. It is a very subtle argument. You know that the Oriental minds especially the minds of the Hindus, are very keen had most logical ones that exist in the world. In fact, they have given the finest logic in the world. Aristotelean logic is only a reflection of the Hindu logic, and that has given birth to all Occidental logic as well as the scientific or materialistic arguments. If you study the Hindu minds, you will find how logical they are, and how deep they can go to all subjects. If you make a false statement, they will see the fallacy right away, and point out that fallacy.

Here a man may deny the existence of the soul, but there we say that by which you deny the existence of your soul, is the proof of your soul. How can that be? It sounds like a puzzle. But there is a deep truth behind it. That by which we know everything and which cannot be known by anything, is our true being, which is immortal and divine, and is not subject to birth or death. Those who do not know this or have not realized this truth, will continue to satisfy their desires, and gratify their ambitions, and remain in the phenomenal world. They come back or born again and again in this phenomenal world, or go to some other plane, or in the spirit world, or in the realm of the senses, and meet their friends and then be separated again from them after perhaps thousands of years. If we desire after death to remain with our relatives or ancestors, we may remain with them for an indefinite period, as long as our desire will continue. But that desire will lead to some other desire, which may bring about separation again. Then we would not consider it as a separation, but as a pleasure. Just as on this plane, when a person is married, for instance, may think on the day of the wedding that it is the happiest day in his or her life and then after a few years he or she is ready to get a divorce and think once more to gain the happiest day in his or her life, by getting another wedding day, and so on. So that kind of desire

may happen, because we are never satisfied with phenomenal conditions, which are imperfect. It is only the one condition that is perfect. Until we have reached that perfect condition, we can never remain satisfied. We may be with our parents and friends, but when we discover their limitations, we will look for something higher, and something greater. We will find greater friends then, and the old friends will appear as to small, or not worthy of us. What shall we do then? In our lifetime, on this plane, we find that who were the friends of our childhood or of our school life, they are no more in this world. They were most intimate at one time. Perhaps those who are our friends today, may not be friends after twenty years. Such is the phenomenal world. We cannot depend upon anything. The fools only depend upon certain conditions not knowing the law that those conditions will never remain the same always. The wise men never depend upon anything knowing that they are subject to change. There is only one thing which is not subject to change, and that is God, the Absolute. If God does not exist, the world would appear as nothing, because it is constantly changing. The phenomenal world is changing always on an unchanging substance which is God, the Absolute. Can we depend upon our own bodies, for instance? No, they are constantly changing. We are living just as in a whirlpool of minute particles of atoms and molecules, which are whirling in the form of a vortex. That is what we call our body. The minute particles or atoms are constantly going out of our system and new particles are coming in, and these constant influx and outflux are what we call body. Can we depend upon it? No, every morning the body is new. Even the brain-cells are not the same after seven years, and so how can we depend upon our bodies? Take our sense powers, and we cannot depend on them. Our mental conditions are also changing constantly, and the wise man is one who sees these things as they are in reality and never deludes himself by making mistakes. We cannot transcend this true being, which is immortal in nature. If we have known it, we have conquered death. If we have not known it, we will have to know it in future, sooner or later, and the knowledge of that immortal nature will bring perfection to the soul, and will bring the realization of the absolute Being, whom the religionists worship as God, or the absolute Brahman.

CHAPTER XV

ONENESS AMIDST THE MANIFOLD

In the last chapter, we have seen that our true self does not sleep. It keeps awake even when we are in deep sleep. So it should be remembered that our true self is behind the mind, intellectual functions, emotions, sensations, perceptions, and other faculties of our mental organism. In fact, the true self is the foundation of our existence. It is the prime source of consciousness, intelligence and life. Upon this true self depend all our mental and physical activities. That is, the physical and the mental activities would not exist, if there were no conscious entity or the *Atman*, as the foundation of them. As it is in us, so it is in all living creatures, in angels, in the *devas*, in gods, in bright spirits, and in every being as well. In every individual, whether angelic, spiritual, human, or animal, if you examine closely, you will find that this source of consciousness, intelligence and existence is at the bottom of all physical and mental activities. None can transcend it, nor can one go beyond it. We cannot go beyond our self.

By 'Self' we mean here the true self, the *Atman*. Everything else depends upon our true self, because the true Self is the substratum of all the things of the world. Even the very existence of God or the conception of God depends upon our true self. "If I die, my God cannot exist" this was said by one of the Christian mystics of the middle ages. The contention of the mystic is: "If I am dead, how can my God exist? Because the very conception of my God is my own conception, and it entirely depends upon my own being".

When you think of God as sitting in the heaven, if you analyse that conception of God, you will find that if you are deprived of your conscious entity, the *Atman*, you cannot have such a conception. Such a conception depends upon the existence of the conscious entity, which is your true self. If we say: "There is a sun", then it can be asked who says that? But it should be remembered that we are nothing but the conscious entities. Therefore we who are conscious entities, know that

there is the sun, the stars, the moon, and everything else. In our unconscious state, that is, in the state when we are not conscious of external objects like the sun, moon and stars, we do not know their existence. In fact, they do not exist in relation to us. In our deep sleep, when we are unconscious of our surroundings, the external world does not exist in relation to us i.e. to our conscious entities. We are away from this external world which depends upon our sense perceptions, and if we try to go beyond it, or to transcend this self or conscious entity, we fail. So everything must be determined by our true self, and not ourselves be determined by everything.

Now the question arises: how many true selves are there? Are there many true selves, or is there but one true self? That is the most abstruse subject in metaphysics for discussion. We say that each one of us possesses a true self, but we must remember that when we speak of true Self, we do not mean the ego or the sense of 'I', but we mean the *Atman* or that eternal source of consciousness and intelligence which exists as the background of the ego or 'I'. Now, the question arises: how many true selves are there? There have been various thinkers and philosophers who have discussed this problem from various viewpoints, and have come to different conclusions. All the dualistic thinkers believe that there are many true selves or souls, and each individual possesses a self which is independent of others, or which is separate from others, and so the true self is many, according to them.

There are the upholders of the *Sankhya* philosophy, who believe in the same way that each individual *purusha* or self is separate from that of other beings. But in Vedanta, we find that it is not many, and it is the part of one universal true Self. In every one of us, there is a manifested portion of the self of the universal source of consciousness. Now, how can we arrive at that conclusion? If we can only analyse the nature of our true Self as beyond all attributes, and also as the only source of consciousness, intelligence and existence, then we find that every individual existence is similar, or every individual consciousness is the same. That is, your consciousness and my consciousness are not different and only the object of consciousness varies. When we are all sitting here together, we are conscious of being here in this room. That consciousness is one. Similarly when

all the inhabitants of the earth think that they exist now, that consciousness of existence is one, just as the state of living in its most abstract sense is one. The life-force is one, just as the electricity is one. Now the electricity may be in each street-car, and there may be thousands of cars running in the world, and each car is moved by electricity, or possesses the light. The ignorant person, seeing the electric light in the car, will perhaps say that it is only individual light, or that it is separate from the rest of electric lights in other cars, or from those in private houses, but the electricity as such is one. There may be thousands and thousands of dynamos producing that current and that current may be manipulated in so many various ways, but still there is oneness at the back of all.

As for example, the gas-lamps are burning. Here in this room there are four lamps. Each one is separate, and yet the gas is the same, as it comes from a common source. If we remember these illustrations and apply them to our own being, then we find that although each individual self is conscious or appears as distinct and separate from others, yet the source of consciousness is one and not many, and also its nature is always the same. The state of consciousness in a man and the state of consciousness in a dog are not different, because as consciousness it is one. A cat is conscious of its surroundings, just in the same way as a human being is, but the range may be smaller in a cat. The range may be still smaller in a minute animalcule, but as a state of consciousness, it is the same. It varies only in expression and not in its nature at all.

In this way, if we analyse our own state of consciousness and compare it with that of others, we find that it is the same, and it is of a similar nature. When the angelic beings or gods are conscious, they have the same consciousness and have the same intelligence like ours. Intelligence as intelligence is one, but its manifestations are many. The same conscious intelligent being or entity also manifests in various forms. It manifests through human beings, through animals and through the minutest animalcules, angelic forms, forms of bright spirits, and also through the form of the personal God. A personal God is conscious, and His consciousness is not different from that of ours, only His range of consciousness is cosmic, while our range of consciousness is very limited. That would be the difference,

and, therefore, this following illustration is given here: "As one fire coming into this world manifests itself through various forms, so the one, all-pervading Being, the universal conscious entity, manifests itself through various forms, human, animal and angelic, yet it is beyond all forms"¹

Take the illustration of the fire. The fire has no particular form, and it is only the vibration or heat in a certain state. But when that fire burns a log (if the log be of any particular shape, square or round, then when the fire is burning), that log will take its shape. But fire itself has no shape, neither square, nor circular, nor round. It has no particular form, but it takes the form of the substance, where it manifests itself. There may be a triangular shape of the fire. When a building is burning it may have a different shape, very tall, or square, or oblong, or circular, or any other shape. But all these forms of the combustible objects do not limit the shape of fire, or do not limit fire itself. Fire exists everywhere, only in an invisible form, and as these forms cannot limit that which we call fire, so the various forms of beings through which that one source of consciousness and intelligence is manifesting itself, cannot limit the source. Various forms cannot limit that one source of intelligence and consciousness. One source of consciousness and intelligence cannot be limited by various forms. It is beyond the forms at the same time, just as the electricity is manifesting in various forms of light, heat, and motion. Still these manifestations do not limit the electricity or the electric current which is in the universe, or which is in the objects, or which is in the atmosphere. The Ruler of Death, therefore, gives here another illustration: "As one vibration of air appears in various forms by coming into the world, so the one eternal Being is all-pervading, appears in various forms and manifests itself in various ways".²

१। अग्निर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव ।

एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिःश्च ॥

—कठ उपनिषद् २।२।६

२। वायुर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव ।

एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिःश्च ॥

—कठ उपनिषद् २।२।७

Take the vibrations of air as producing different notes of music, the difference is only in degree, but the air is the same. When you take the wind-pipe and blow it, the notes may vary, but the air is one and the same. Similarly the source of consciousness is one and the same, although its manifestations are myriad. And as air exists outside of all the wind-instruments and cannot be limited by them, so the eternal source of consciousness cannot be limited by any of the manifestations, but exists outside of them also.

Take another illustration of space. The space of this room is distinct from the space of the room behind, and there may be millions of rooms, each possessing a differentiated space within the walls, but at the same time the space exists outside of all rooms. It cannot be limited. There may be millions of rooms, but still the infinite space cannot be limited by all those rooms. So the infinite spirit which pervades this universe, may appear to be limited by the individual manifestations, but, in reality, it can never be limited. It is limitless.

By all these illustrations the Ruler of Death tries to impress upon the mind of Nachiketa, the seeker after absolute Truth, that, although the manifestations are many, the source is one and universal and infinite. So each individual soul may appear as distinct and separate from other souls, yet they are all so many expressions or manifestations of the one universal Being, which is the source of all consciousness and intelligence. This cosmic intelligence or consciousness is never affected by the changes of the body, mind, or intellect. It is never contaminated by corruptions, sufferings, imperfections, pains and sorrows of the individuals. This will help you to understand very clearly that our true Self is never contaminated by sins which the individuals may commit. The true Self is beyond all imperfections or contaminations, and this idea is beautifully given in the following verse:

"As the sun, who is the giver of all light as well as of all sight, is not affected or contaminated by the defects of the individual eyes, so the universal self is not contaminated by the imperfections of the individual minds and bodies; and as the sun is above and beyond all contaminations, so is this

true Self (*Atman*) beyond all imperfections and corruptions".¹

The sun may be covered by a cloud, or the cloud covers the sun, but does the cloud really cover the sun? No. We know that a piece of cloud may cover the whole earth, but that cloud would not be large enough to cover the sun. It is only our eyesight that is covered by the cloud, and so we do not see the sun. The sun is there above the clouds and shines as bright as ever.² If you are on the top of a high mountain, there you will see that people in the valley cannot see the sun. They are suffering from the rain, chill and storm, but when you are above the clouds, you are in continuous sunshine. That will give you an idea that the sun cannot be covered by clouds, but it appears that the sun is covered by clouds. It is beyond the reach of all clouds. Similarly, the self-effulgent sun of the true Self is beyond the reach of all clouds of sorrow, grief, suffering or misfortune. They may appear between the ego and the true Self, and this true Self may be hidden for the time being, and may be invisible by the ego for the time being, but it exists just the same. An atheist or agnostic who denies the existence of the true Self, does so simply because his spiritual sight is shrouded by the cloud of ignorance or darkness of ignorance and so he cannot see it. So all our sorrows, sufferings and miseries do not affect our true Self. If we remember this, we shall be able to overcome suffering and the worst kind of grief and sorrow that we may have. This is the only remedy, and he who has realized it, can remain absolutely happy in the midst of the ocean of sorrows, sufferings, misfortunes and pains. All these sorrows and sufferings we consider as our own, because we do not understand our true self on account of our ignorance.

Ignorance is the cause of all sufferings. It is the cause of all kinds of misfortune and sorrow. When a person loses anything, if he remembers that the true Self cannot lose anything,

१। सूर्यो यथा सर्वलोकस्य चक्षुर्न लिप्यते चाक्षुर्वैर्बाह्यदोषैः ।

एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा न लिप्यते लोकदुःखेन बाह्यः ॥

— कठ उपनिषद् २।२।१

² Vide "alpo'pi megho'nekayojanayata-madityamandalam * *" etc.—Vedantasara

then sorrow is gone, and there is no grief. If we know that the soul is immortal, then when a friend dies, we have no reason to mourn over him, or to grieve for him. Of course, some people may think that it would not be human. When they say that they mean that they wish to remain on the plane of sorrow and grief and imperfection and ignorance ; but a wise man is one who has risen above all human imperfections. When we identify our true self with the physical condition, then we think by mistake that these physical conditions affect our true Self. The disease of the body, or pain in the body would then affect our individual selves, because we have not been able to separate the true Self from the physical conditions ; but, in reality, the true Self is far above the physical conditions. The physical conditions cannot produce any change in true Self (*Atman*).

If you see a piece of rope in the dark, you will think that it is a snake. Then you will get frightened, and all that fear is due to that delusive impression that that piece of rope is a snake ; but when light breaks upon your life, you find that all this fright or agony or suffering was due to ignorance or self-delusion. Similarly, all these sufferings of the body, grief, sorrow and agony are delusions of the soul. Such souls as are not conscious of the true Self, suffer from grief, sorrow, misery, and physical ailments.

The birth and death of the body do not affect the true Self. We may be born or we may die, but still our true Self remains immutable throughout. This is the absolute Truth. The Ruler of Death seeks to impress this Truth upon the mind of Nachiketa, because the latter wants to know the way by which one can transcend the realm of death. And that realm is nowhere, but already within us. If we understand this true Self, we understand the Kingdom of Heaven which is within us, and in that Kingdom of Heaven no death can enter. Ordinary mortals are afraid of death, because they identify themselves with the body, which is subject to birth and death. They cannot separate themselves from the physical changes, and, therefore, they fear ; but wise men who have realized their true Self, are never afraid of death. They know that the soul (*Atman*), or the true self, cannot be destroyed, cannot die, and cannot be changed.

This true Self, I have already described, is part and parcel of the universal Being, or the Self of the universe. He is the absolute Lord of the universe. As the true self in our individual bodies is the Lord as well as the highest of all organic functions, mental conditions, and intellectual functions, so the true Self of the universe is. We may compare the gross physical universe with our gross physical bodies, that is, the gross physical universe is the body of the cosmic self. The sun, moon and stars, all these are in the body of the cosmic self, and the cosmic self rules and governs all these different organs and their functions, just as the true self in us governs our physical and organic functions. We must not forget that we are the rulers of our own bodies. We are not slaves. The source of consciousness and intelligence is the master of the body, and also of the mind and senses, sense organs, and of everything. Similarly, the Lord of the universe is the one Who rules and governs everything of the universe. He is the sole Ruler of the whole universe. Where does He live? Does He live outside of the universe? No, He inter-penetrates every particle of atoms and molecules. He is everywhere. God is not above and beyond this universe, as taught in the Sunday schools for the Christian children that He sits somewhere on a golden throne. No, the Lord of the universe is here, in every atom of our body, in every inch of this wall, in every inch of this space and everywhere. We must feel Him; we must realize Him. He is beyond our reach, but He pervades the whole universe, and pervades our mind, body, and everything, yet He makes everything appear in different forms. He moulds everything, and brings changes in everything all the time. He is the cause of all changes. He makes that one substance appear in so many forms. He takes the substance of ether, for instance, and shapes it. By the process of vibration and evolution and molecular attraction He shapes that one substance in the form of the sun, moon, stars, earth, and other organic and inorganic substances of the universe. Everything has come from that one eternal source. Just as a potter may take a lump of clay and may produce various vases and cups and saucers and other things from one substance, so the Lord of the universe produces all these from one substance. But that illustration of the potter will mislead the ordinary minds, because the potter

is outside of clay. But if you can put the potter inside the clay and make him work, then we will understand how the Lord works through the materials living inside. He lives in the earth, and makes her move. He lives in the atoms, and makes the atoms attract other atoms, or repel some other atoms and that force comes from Him. Ordinary minds have a queer conception of God as a very prodigious being. They may think how can that vast being enter into an atom. Therefore, the ancient seers of Truth in India declared: "He is smaller than the smallest; He is larger than the largest at the same time".¹ He dwells in an atom and a molecule, yet He pervades the solar system. That is the most wonderful thing; and it is not very wonderful if we understand it clearly.

Take the illustration of space. Now the space can be in this room or in the universe, yet at the same time the space can be in an atom. What is an atom without space? Can an atom exist without space? No, it is not possible. The very form of that atom means that portion of space. The space is not limited by the atoms, yet it dwells in an atom. What is this sun? The form of the sun may be thousands of times larger than the earth, but that very form means so much the space and nothing else. The same space which is in the atom, is also in the solar system. When we find such illustration, why should we wonder that God can live in an atom and at the same time be the infinite Being? It is possible.

The *Upanishad* states: "He who sees this Being as pervading his own heart and own soul, attains to everlasting joy, and such joy does not come to others who do not realize Him in their hearts."² Now we shall be able to understand clearly that the true self, which is the background of our own being as well as of our own conscious existence, is a part of this infinite cosmic spirit or cosmic self, and this true self is seated in every individual, so if every individual realizes the cosmic self

१। अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयान् आत्माख्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम्।

—कठ उपनिषद् २।१।१०

२। तस्मात्स्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वती नेतरेषाम्।

—कठ उपनिषद् २।२।२३

as seated in his heart, he attains to that serene blissful condition and everlasting happiness. The *Upanishad* states: "That infinite Being is eternal in the midst of non-eternal phenomena. Now you see what are the non-eternal phenomena. These are the names and the forms and also the forms of the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, etc. All the forms are non-eternal. Everything that is an aggregate of matter as well as the result of a combination of matter is non-eternal, and everything that is the simplest, and finest, is eternal. The atoms are more eternal than the earth, the sun, the moon and the stars. Because they are finer and simpler. What is finer than an atom? The space and the force are finer than atom. The space and the force are also more eternal than the atoms. Again what is finer than the space? It is the conscious intelligence or true Self, and, therefore, that is the simplest thing in the universe. You know that God is the simplest thing in the universe, and, therefore, He cannot perish; and the true Self, being the simplest thing in the universe, is immortal, and it cannot perish. In fact, all things that are complex, must perish. Body is complex, mind and sense organs are complex, intellect is complex, and, therefore, they all perish. But the true Self, the *Atman*, upon which our true consciousness depends is one with our conscious entity, and is immortal, and therefore, cannot die. Now we understand that the self-conscious cosmic entity is eternal in the midst of the non-eternal phenomena, and is the one source of intelligence, nay, is all-wise intelligent Being that guides and rules this universe. Intelligence is always the ruler of the matter, or the material objects. As I have explained that the intelligent soul is the ruler of the material form of the body and the producer of all the organic functions, so the intelligent cosmic Being is the ruler of everything in this universe. Therefore, He is called the Ruler and the Governor, and also the Lord of the universe. These are all terms which mean the same thing. He governs everything, because intelligence is always the governor.

Look at the tremendous power of electricity. It can kill hundreds of beings at a time, but one intelligent man, who holds the key, guides and directs all these dynamos and this tremendous force. He can produce that force, and can stop it. So intelligence is always the ruler over the material forces, or

the mechanical forces. Then you may say that why cannot we rule over this tremendous material force which is manifested in Mount Vesuvius? Because our intelligence is not large enough to control that. That is all. It needs a bigger intelligence to control that. We do not understand the cause, and we are in absolute darkness of what is happening underneath. We do not know that in any way. If we could know that, we could stop it. Knowledge is power, and, therefore, we cannot control that. But everything that we know in our limited way, we may have control over it. Higher intelligence will control that, and will control everything; and also the cosmic intelligence will control the movements of the stars, solar system, planets and everything that exists in this phenomenal universe. The *Upanishad* says: "Amids all transient things He is everlasting. He is the source of consciousness of all conscious beings. Yet He is one in the midst of many. He fulfils the desires and prayers of all beings. Whosoever realizes Him as seated in his heart, is worthy of Him. Verily to him comes the eternal peace and to none else". The wise ones who have realized Him, have gained eternal peace. All questions and doubts of their minds are answered and solved, and, therefore, they are possessed of eternal peace, and they are never disturbed by anything. Infinite wisdom has manifested in them; so they know anything and everything.

The passages of the *Upanishads* are very beautiful. They are like inspirations which came to the seers of Truth. This language (*Sanskrit*) is called the language of the gods (*deva-bhasha*), i.e. no human mind constructed such sentences. It was the spontaneous expression of the higher power that guides our souls. This is what they call the Veda. The 'Veda' means knowledge that comes by revelation. But what do we mean by 'revelation'? 'Revelation' means that higher knowledge which comes spontaneously to the soul. Think of this idea of unity in variety which these most ancient seers (*Rishis*) grasped thousands of years before the Christian era. How old these are we do not know, because they do not give the date, and, therefore, they call these eternal truths coming from eternity to eternity. They never limit the truth by time, because truth is beyond time and space. In fact, the eternal Truth is beyond time and space. How can it be limited by time? Ordinary

mortals try to find history and dates. Now, what is the foundation of date? The dates signify that somebody lived at a certain time, and did a certain thing, and that would be the beginning of dates. Christ lived and died, or some other Buddha lived and died. Count how many years ago, and that is the way we count. But the eternal truth cannot be limited by that. Before the seers, truth existed, and so they never limited the truth by time or by dates.

Here a question arises in the mind of this young seeker. after the eternal Truth, and he asks: "They perceive that highest unspeakable joy; how can I understand it? Has it its own light, or does it reflect light"? Now this one truth or one cosmic Being is realized by the sages and by the seers who say: 'This is That' (*ayamatma Brahman*)—this true self in us is that which governs the universe and there they find that unity. 'This' means the immediate source of consciousness, and 'That' means, what exists as the cosmic consciousness beyond our reach. Or, you may say: 'This' is subject and 'That' is object, but 'This is That' i.e. the subject and the object are one and the same. That is, the reality of the subjective and that of the objective are one and the same. This one peculiarity you will find in the Vedanta philosophy. You will find nowhere else, not even in Plato, Hegel, or Kant or Schopenhauer—that oneness (*ekatvam*) of the subjective and the objective reality, and oneness between the cosmic self and the true self of the individual being. They are one and the same. It is unity in variety and this truth was first understood by the vedic sages in ancient India.

So Nachiketa asked. "How can I understand this most unspeakable joy, which is acquired through the realization of this unity? Has this one substance or one Being its own light? Is it self-effulgent, or does it borrow light from something else? Is it intelligence by itself, or does it borrow intelligence from some other source?" Now, mark the depth of that question. Indeed the seeker after highest truth was a great metaphysician,

२। न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्र-तारकम् ।

नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।२।१५

and Vedanta gives us the solution of all problems, whether they are metaphysical, philosophical, scientific or spiritual. And the Ruler of Death answers that question thus in the verse: "The sun does not shine there, neither the moon, nor the stars, nor the lightnings, so how can the earthly fire shine or illuminate!" All these lights we perceive in the universe, cannot shine and illumine that substance or Being, who is the Ruler and Lord of the universe, and who is our true Self. The sun, moon, stars, lightning, and earthly fire are illumined by that self-effulgent universal light, which is the Light of the universe. All these lights of the physical world shine after being illuminated by the light of intelligence. The light of intelligence is really the illuminator of all-shining objects like the sun, the moon and the stars.

Now if there were no conscious being to know this existence of sun, what would have become of the sun? Who could have known that there is the sun, if everything of this universe be unintelligent like the unintelligent material objects like chairs or tables, and who would have known that there is the sun, and who would have enjoyed the existence of the sun? The sun cannot exist, if the light of intelligence does not illumine the very light of the sun, and, therefore, the light of intelligence cannot borrow its light from anywhere else. But, on the contrary, everything else borrows its light from that cosmic Being who is the source of all intelligence and all consciousness. The true Self is like the illuminator of the mind, intellect, ego, and sense powers. In fact, we cannot know our own existence, if there be not the light of intelligence within us, and when we are conscious of ourselves, then we are conscious of everything else—the sun, the moon, and the stars. Therefore the light of the true Self or *Atman* is the illuminator of everything of the universe.

As a chair which is a material and insentient object, cannot illumine the self-conscious entity, or cannot make itself known to any unintelligent substance, so the sun cannot make itself known to the earth, or the earth cannot make itself known to the sun, because it requires intelligence, and that intelligence is our true self. Therefore the very existence of the sun, the moon and the stars and of everything depends upon this cosmic intelligence. And this cosmic intelligence is not far from us

By knowing it, we shall realize our immortal nature, and shall dwell in the realm of the ever-lasting bliss. And then and then only we realize that unique Brahman which pervades and underlies all the manifold world of nescience.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PHENOMENAL UNIVERSE AND THE BRAHMAN

The sixteenth chapter begins with a beautiful illustration of the phenomenal universe, and this illustration is of a tree:

उर्द्धं मुलोऽवाक् शाख एषोऽश्वत्थः सनातनः ।
तदेव शुक्रं तद्ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते ॥
तस्मिन् लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तदु नात्येति कश्चन ।
एतद्वै तत् ॥१

In the last chapter, we have seen that the ultimate reality of the universe is one, all-pervading, and beyond all phenomenal appearances. It is beyond the sun, the moon, and the stars. It cannot be enlightened or illuminated by the light of the sun, nor by that of the moon, nor by that of the stars. That eternal one is the root of the phenomenal universe, and this phenomenal universe, nay, all the universe which we perceive with our sense powers may be compared to a fig tree (*Ficus Indica*), which has its root upward and branches downwards. But this fig tree of the phenomenal universe is not destructible and impermanent, but is everlasting and eternal.

Here you will notice that this conception was prevalent among the ancient vedic seers of truth as well as among the philosophers of ancient India. They had an idea that the verse was eternal, and it had not come into existence out of nothing, nor will go back to nothing, but it came into existence from the infinite reality, which is one, and it will go back to the infinite reality.

Now questions may naturally arise in the minds of ordinary men as to how this tree of the phenomenal universe has come into existence. Has it come out of nothing ; has it been created by a personal God, or what was the cause of it ? Many of you, perhaps, know that the whole system of the Vedanta philosophy does not believe in the special creation of the universe, as it is

described in Genesis, but it believes in the cosmic evolution from that one eternal foundational energy. In fact, the conception of creation which we get from modern science as well as from the philosophy of Herbert Spencer or Heckel, was given centuries before Christ by the ancient vedic seers, and so this idea of evolution is an old idea. It existed in India long before Pythagoras, Democrites and other Greek philosophers.

Now it can be asked as to why is this universe compared to a tree. Because we can get a very clear idea of the evolution of the universe, just as we find in the growth of a tree from its root. In fact, the greatest scientists of modern times have used this illustration of the tree of evolution, with its root in the one cosmic energy; but that illustration, as we see, is an old one, and the root of this phenomenal tree is the infinite Being, which is called the Brahman. It has been said in the Vedas and *Upanishads* that from that infinite substance everything has come into existence. If we go backward in the process of evolution step by step. We shall also find that all the objects of the sense perceptions can be reduced to their simplest elements of the atoms and molecules and forces. If we go a little further we shall find that the atoms and molecules are nothing but the force-centres. These atoms and molecules are the manifestations of the eternal energy, or the infinite source of all forces of the universe. Now that eternal energy which may be called as the mother of the universe, was described by the Hindu philosophers as *Prakriti*, or creative energy. In fact, that energy is not separable from the infinite substance, but it is one and inseparable. That infinite substance is called the Brahman, and when we understand this relation between the eternal energy and the eternal substance of the universe, the Brahman, which is the source of all existence, intelligence, consciousness, we shall be able to know the real cause of all phenomena.

The Sanskrit word for a tree is *vriksha*. Now *vriksha* is a word which comes from the root *unshch* and that means 'to cut'. That is, 'that which can be cut', 'cut asunder', is called *vriksha*; and that word has been used here purposely to show that this phenomenal world, although in its essence it is eternal, is transitory. As far as appearances go, this phenomenal world is transitory. It is not permanent, but is constantly changing.

The same form or object we do not see twice, as every second the things are changing in this world. The sun which you saw this morning, you will never see again. The sun is also subject to constant change. The face which you have seen in a mirror this morning, has changed already. You will never see that face again. You will see another face similar to it, but not the same. That is a remarkable fact. We say that we are growing older in age, and enjoy in that idea that we are growing older ; but, in fact, we are losing so much that we are not the same as we were before. And the idea we must always keep in our mind that this tree of the phenomenal universe is subject to change, as it is subject to growth.¹

Evolution means change. If we are all subject to evolution, by that we mean that we cannot remain stationary, and cannot remain the same always. So everything that is subject to evolution, is subject to change. Everything that is subject to growth, is also subject to change. And, in this world, we have various kinds of experiences like that of birth, growth, decay and death. All these things are constantly happening before our eyes. What do they mean ? They mean that the germ of life is subject to change. The earth, in which we live and have our beings, is also subject to change. It is a fact that this earth was at one time gaseous like a mass of vapour, and gradually it has become habitable, and vegetables have grown, and animals of various species have also come into existence. Now, this earth contained all germs even in its gaseous state. In fact, the whole universe contains the germs, and the space contains the germs of all life. Everything in this universe is living ; and at the same time although we cannot see the germs.

¹ Acarya Sankara says in the commentary.

“उर्द्धमूलः—उर्द्धमूलं यत्तद्विष्णोः परमं पदमस्येति सोऽयं अव्यक्तादिस्थावरान्तः संसारवृक्ष उर्द्धमूलः। वृक्षश्च वचनात् विनश्यत्वात्। अविच्छिन्न-जन्म-जरा-मरण-शोकाद्यनेकानर्थक्यैः प्रतिक्षणसंन्यथास्वभावो मायामरीच्युदक्रान्धर्वनगरादिष्वदृष्टानुत्तरूपत्वादवसाने च वृक्षवदभावात्मकः, कदलीस्तम्बवत् निःसारः अनेकशतपाषण्ड-बुद्धिविकल्पास्पदः * * * एष संसारवृक्षः अश्वत्थः—अश्वत्थवत् कामकर्मवातेरित-नित्यप्रचलितस्वभावः स्वर्गनरकतिर्यक् प्रेतादिभिः शाखाभिरवाक् शाखः (अवाहः शाखा यस्य सः) ।”

of life which are more permanent than the grosser forms, yet we must remember that these grosser forms are not the realities. The realities are those which are the finest and imperceptible. But that which is perceptible, is subject to change ; that which we can see with our eyes or hear with our ears, or smell, or touch, or taste, is subject to change ; but that which is imperceptible, cannot be seen, cannot be heard or smelled or tasted or touched, is more permanent, and if we put our thought upon the grossest objects, we are sure to come to grief and disappointment in the end. If we cling, or become attached to these gross material forms, we are sure to come to grief in the end, but if we become attached to the imperceptible, finest, and invisible reality, we shall never come to grief. The wise ones are those who can withdraw their minds from the gross material objects, and fix them upon the finest, imperceptible, and invisible reality of the universe. In other words, those who can see the root of this tree of this phenomenal universe, and instead of being attracted by the flowers and fruits and leaves and branches, can go to the root or source of this tree, and are able to rise above all changes, and are able to reach the plane of immortality. They are able to conquer death, and that is what the Ruler of Death (Yama) is trying to explain here that those who can go to the root of this phenomenal universe, will have immortal life. But those who are on the branches and leaves, are attracted by the beautiful flowers of this tree of the phenomenal universe, and they will remain subject to birth and death. They cannot transcend the realm of death, and they cannot also enter into the abode of immortality.

People whose minds are deluded by various worldly desires and ambition, cannot see the root. They are satisfied with the flowers and the leaves and the branches which are perceptible by the senses, which are extremely attractive, and which keep us busy on this material plane. But only the seekers after the Absolute and the wise ones can discover the root, and enter into the realm of immortality. The wise ones take the sword of right discrimination as given in Vedanta, and with that sword they cut off the trunk of this tree. They separate this tree of universe from the root, and remain in absolute peace and everlasting happiness. When I say: 'they cut off the root and destroy the tree', of course they cannot destroy the tree in

its universal sense, but the individual tree is cut off. That is, if we remember that each individual tree is cut off and that each individual soul is the centre of a world, wherein it dwells, then we shall be able to know that by cutting off the individual world, the whole realm of senses and perceptions and feelings is cut off. The seed of this tree is in that unmanifested, indescribable and eternal energy (*anirvachya avyakta*). There is the seed of the tree of this phenomenal world, and there is the germ. Again and again that germ sprouts up, and produces the phenomena. The first manifestation of that seed or germ is the First-Born Lord of the universe who is ordinarily known as of this tree ; He produces, and He gradually develops Himself as the Creator (Brahma). He is produced first ; He is the seedling into the tree

The First-Born Lord of the universe is the highest manifestation. But it can be asked as to who is this First-Born Lord of the universe. In fact, the First-Born Lord is the cosmic ego, and that cosmic Self first rises from the ashes of the absolute substance, and the eternal energy then begins to evolve and manifest itself in the form of phenomena. It is then differentiated between the subject and the object, and the ego and the non-ego. And this First-Born Lord of the universe, or the cosmic ego, is called in Vedanta the Hiranyagarbha. He who dwells in the Golden Egg i.e. which is the matrix of creation. This universe is like the egg, and the Lord dwells in it in the form of a child. This is, of course, a mythological description of the creation, but it shows that the First-Born is the germ or seed in the manifestation, and when it has become seedling, the tree begins to grow, and all the individual souls that exist in the universe, existed before in seed form in that ocean or in that absolute substance. They converge and make up the trunk of the tree, and various branches come out from that trunk according to desires and tendencies. The latent desire or the desire which is latent in each soul is like the water which helps in the growth of that tree.

The Lord of the universe does not create anything to satisfy his own desires, but He starts this cosmic evolution to satisfy or to fulfil the desires of all the individual souls that are latent in that absolute or cosmic energy. Just as, when we go to sleep, our desires are latent, we do not think of anything, we do not

have any duty, but all are latent. And again when we wake up, all these latent desires and tendencies manifest themselves, and begin to play. So, at the time before the beginning of evolution all these souls were latent, or were asleep in that undifferentiated state, and the desires remained latent, and the beginning of evolution means the waking up of this energy which means the awakening of the universe

Whatever exists in this microcosm, exists also in the macrocosm. We can reverse it: whatever exists in the macrocosm, exists also in the microcosm. If we go to sleep, the whole universe does the same, and the interval between the waking and the sleeping is called a cycle, and that cycle is either day or night. When it is day, we call it evolution, and when it is night, we call it involution. So the whole universe goes to sleep and wakes up again ; but when we go to sleep, we are not dead, we and everything exist. And they use this illustration of the waking and the sleeping to show that nothing is lost, but during the sleep state everything remains latent. After the dissolution of the phenomenal universe, everything will remain latent in the seed form. Our bodies may be reduced to their elements, to atoms and to forces of nature. Our souls, however, will remain perfect, or remain intact, and will not be annihilated or dissolved or destroyed, but will continue to exist, and retain all the powers and desires and tendencies which they possess. Then again in the beginning of a new cycle, they will wake up, and the accumulated desires or combined desires of all living creatures will help in the process of evolution of the cosmos.

If this earth had not become habitable, we could not have fulfilled our desires on this plane, and it would have been impossible, and so the process of nature or the law of nature is that the external conditions and environments must first become favourable in order to draw the souls who are ready to manifest their desires and fulfil their purposes. Any planet which is not habitable now, will become habitable in course of time, and then all the souls which are waiting for such manifestations, will begin to express their powers, and will be born, as it were ; but nothing is born out of nothing. It is a scriptural as well as a scientific truth that we are not born out of nothing, but we existed as something, and so long we waited.

When the earth was in its gaseous state we could not find favourable environments to come on the physical or material plane. Perhaps we had at that time gaseous or vapoury bodies. When the whole universe is covered with water, we have watery bodies like waves or fog, or like the form of a bubble. Even in that form the intelligence can be manifested.

The tree of this phenomenal world has many flowers and leaves. The leaves are those acts or duties which we perform during our lifetime, and the flowers are like pleasures, or sensations of pleasure or pain or happiness or pleasant feeling. These are the flowers. And then there are the fruits. The fruits are the results of our works which we perform, and the various planets are like branches, and the heavens are like nests of the birds. That is, the souls who have wings, can go high and can soar high on a spiritual plane, and dwell in those nests which we call heavens.

There are seven heavens, according to the Hindu conception, and these seven heavens are the realms, where different souls go according to their previous works, i.e. according to their merits and their grades. That is, one is higher than another, and the other is still higher, and so on. But the celestial pleasures and happiness vary in form and degree in these different heavens or realms. If we simply think of one heaven, we cannot expect any growth or progress or evolution after going to heaven, and, therefore, the Hindu minds could never accept the conception of the single heaven for all the individuals. It was impossible, and, for that reason, you notice that different religionists or the followers of different religions have different conceptions of heaven. The Jewish heaven is not the same as the Christian heaven, or the Mohammedan heaven is not the same as the Zoroastrian, or the Chinese heaven is not like that of the Hindus. So why should we believe that there is only one heaven, where we shall all go. If heaven exists at all, it must be diversified, and it must be of different kinds and grades. These heavens are like the nests in that tree of the phenomenal world, where these winged souls go, and reside with the angels. The wings are, of course, metaphorical. The souls do not have real wings like the wings of birds, as we see in pictures. They are all symbolic, and they do not mean anything. In the first place, physiologically

it is impossible for you to have hands, when you have wings. The hands and the wings do not exist together, because the hands have developed from the wings, as we see in nature. So when the painter gives wings and hands, such creatures do not exist at all. They are beyond our conception and imagination. In fact, they are symbolic. The winged souls mean those who have performed virtuous deeds and can take a flight on the higher planes of the spiritual realm. They possess the wings, and those who go downward in the infernal regions, have lost their wings, because they gravitate on account of their evil and wicked deeds.

This tree of the phenomenal universe is compared to a fig tree. The Sanskrit word for a fig tree is *ashvathva*. It means, *that which does not last till tomorrow*.¹ That is a word which has been used to convey the idea that this tree of life or of phenomenal world is transitory and ephemeral, and it will pass away. Being subject to change, it will pass away. The leaves, the fruits, the flowers, the branches and everything will pass away, or will be subject to change i.e. will never remain the seers of truth who realized truth through revelation, or in every cycle. When one cycle of evolution will end, everything will go back to its primordial condition. Then before the beginning of a new cycle, the whole tree will come out in a new form, and this idea was given by the ancient thinkers and seers of truth who realized truth through revelation; or, in other words, to whom the truth was revealed. In the vedic scriptures we read: "*surya-chandramasau dhata yatha purva-makalpayat*"; i.e., 'the Lord created the heavens, the sun, moon and stars after the type that existed in previous cycles.'

That will give us an idea how the similar things like sun, moon and stars come into existence, though not the same, since the same moon is gone for ever. For instance, if this earth be destroyed by coming in contact with a comet, the matter and the force will remain in the universe, and the whole earth will be turned into a gaseous state or a vaporous mass. But out of that vaporous mass, another earth will be formed in course of perhaps millions of years. It will not be the same earth, but a similar planet. Such are the suns,

१। श्वः—आगामिनि दिवसेऽपि नस्थाता, इति अश्वत्थः तदाख्यः वृक्षश्च ।

moons, and stars of other planets which are coming into existence and going back to the casual state, and again reappearing with a new garb in a new form. So in that way, although it is constantly changing, the process is eternal, and also the types are eternal. For instance, think of the horse type or human type, and these types exist in the cosmic mind in the form of Logos or Ideas. Their ideal type is eternal. This 'ideal type' or idea has been designated by Mahabhashyakara Patanjali as *sphota*.² The *sphota* is eternal and all the ingredients of the evolution of the universe come out from the *sphota*. The individual forms will disappear, and will come and go, but the 'ideal type' will remain for ever. No one has seen an ideal man or an ideal horse, but people have seen a black horse or a white horse. People have seen a black man or a white man, but the ideal man has not been seen by any one. The ideal man is in the mind of God, or in the cosmic mind. The mould is there and that is eternal. So the mould or type of the sun, the type of the earth, the type of all living creatures all are eternal, although the individuals may change. And in that way we can say that this whole universe is eternal, and yet is transitory. It is eternal in the sense of its essential nature, while it is transitory as far as its appearances or forms change. Our bodies are transitory, but the atoms and the molecules and the force which make up our bodies, are eternal. The type of the form is eternal, but the form may go to pieces any moment. So the form is perishable, whereas the type is imperishable. And all these forces or powers that are manifested in the universe and are constantly evolving or growing and going back to their original condition, are nothing but manifestations or expressions of one continuous mass of energy which is the foundation of the phenomenal universe.

Now where does that eternal mass of energy, which is the mother of all force and all material forms, reside? It resides in that one infinite Absolute. The energy needs a substance to rest upon, and that substance is the absolute Brahman, which is the essence and support of the universe. When we have known that, we have known everything, and nothing is

² The *sphota* is the name of the Ideas. It is an imperceptible and eternal causal sound, from which all phenomenal sounds originated. Patanjali has discussed about it elaborately in *Mahābhāṣya*.

left unknown. "That is called the pure existence, the Absolute", says the Ruler of Death. The pure existence which is free from all imperfection, is self-effulgent. The undying light of intelligence is there. It is not a dead matter, or a dark substance. Some people may fear that when the sun, moon, and stars do not shine, it must be dark. But that is not possible. It is very bright, or is brighter than the light of the sun. Although it does not burn, it is self-effulgent. That light does not depend upon any external condition or any external light, but its nature is to illumine. The pure light of intelligence and consciousness proceeds from that eternal source. That is vast, incomprehensible, unlimited, and infinite. Nothing can limit it. How far we can stretch our minds, we cannot find any limit to that infinite Being. It pervades the universe, and is not confined to any particular place. That is the real goal of immortality. That is the root of this tree which is immortal. It is not subject to any kind of change, and is not subject to evolution, but is beyond change and evolution. God never grows, although the individuals grow. If God is subject to growth, as some of the modern thinkers believe, He is no longer perfect. Again that God who is subject to growth, would not be a perfect God. We would not worship him as a perfected being, because anything that is imperfect, is subject to growth, and that which is perfect, can never grow beyond it. Those who believe that perfection is a continuous progress, do not understand the meaning of perfection.¹ That idea which means continuous growth, is imperfect at every step. When the growth reaches its climax and cannot go further, perfection is reached, and that state is divine, and God is that. 'That is immortality'. 'Upon that substance everything rests'. That substance is the foundation of the universe. The infinite space rests upon that substance; the sun, moon and stars, the planets and earth, all depend upon It as their foundation. 'Nothing can go beyond that substance, and nothing can transcend It, and that is the truth, or reality of the universe'. That is the truth of our being as well as the essence of our being, because that is all-pervading. And thus Yama answers the question of that young seeker after truth who

¹ The Marxists maintain this view. They say that we shall eternally march towards the perfection, and shall never reach it. But that is a hopeless theory, because what has a beginning, has an end

wanted to know the absolute Being and is beyond all changes, growth and death.

Here you will notice that these ideas which you get in the oldest writings of Vedanta, you will find in no other man-made books or ordinary philosophies, which are nothing but products of imperfect minds. These ideas are not given by any particular human mind, but they are given as *revelations*. And why do we call them *revelations*? Because when human minds transcend intellect and mental limitations, certain truths are realized, and when those truths are described, they are called *revelations*. But anything that is grasped intellectually by reasoning, is not a *revelation*. That is the difference. These truths were not realized by reasoning, but they came intuitively like a flash. The word *intuition*² is used for them, but it is not a perfect expression, and we have no better expression than that. We may say intuitively that they reached that consciousness, but it is more than *intuition*. It may be called the *superconscious realization*, and when superconscious realization comes everything that is revealed in that state becomes *revelation*. Everything that is known in that state, is *revelation*, and is beyond the reach of intellectual reasoning. These ordinary philosophers like Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer and others attain to certain truths by reasoning *i.e.* through an intellectual process, and, therefore, they are not perfect. Their conclusions are not also perfect. But these conclusions which you find here in these oldest *Upanishads*, for instance, will remain the same always, and cannot be changed, because they are truths.³

The seers of the *Upanishads* did not reach those truths by following the rules of logic or the rules of reasoning, but they realized first, and then, synthetically, applied the rules of logic to explain it and to make it understood by ordinary minds. That is the difference. So, if we can make a picture of this phenomenal universe as a tree with its roots upward, it be-

² Kant calls this *intuition* as sensuous, but the seers of the upanisadic Truth call intuition as nonsensuous and divine.

³ The truth of the *Upanishad* is an immediate *revelation* or a direct vision. Thus *revelation* of truth is uncontradicted (*avādhutam*) all the time, and nothing can contradict it. It is not taken from anyone (*anadhigata*), but is self-revealed (*svayam-prakasha*) and self-illuminated (*svayam-jiyoti*), and so it is always free from any kind of error (*bhṛanti*) and change (*vikṛiti*). It remains the same all the time, past, present and future (*trikālāvādhutam*).

comes incomprehensible by ordinary minds, and it is unknown and unknowable even by human intellect. So come downward, and take one step first from that infinite substance to the First-Born Lord of the universe, the Hiranyagarbha, who is the seedling, and then come down through the process of evolution from ether or ethereal substance to gaseous, liquid, or solid form and come down to the lowest plane of animals, vegetables, minerals, etc. These are like branches. Then take the flowers and leaves. The leaves are the good works or duties; the flowers are the enjoyments or pleasures of life; and fruits are the results of our works which we perform and make a picture, and then you will be able to understand how this phenomenal universe is related to the absolute Being. And at the same time you ought to remember that the absolute Being is not far away from your true Self, so your true Self forms a part of the same absolute Being. If you wish to find the root of the universe anywhere, you will find it in yourself. That is strange. That idea you do not find anywhere else. No other philosopher has given that idea, and not even Kant, or Hegel, or Plato. Herein is the unique place of Vedanta among the philosophies of the world, and, therefore, we should try to understand it very carefully. We should think upon it, meditate upon it, and make every effort to realize it as our true Self. Find the source of the universe in our true Self, which is behind our egos, and when we have discovered it, we have found the eternal and immortal part of our own self. Then we shall be able to transcend death and enjoy everlasting life and peace.

CHAPTER XVII

WORLD AS THE RESULT OF VIBRATIONS

We have seen in the last chapter the beautiful illustration of the fig tree which represents the phenomenal world. The root of that tree is upwards and the branches are downwards. The root is in 'the Brahman, the infinite Being, and the branches cover all the objects which we perceive with our senses. The sun, moon, stars and everything are the animate and inanimate objects.

Now, in order to understand the cause that produces this tree of the world, we must know first of all the power or force which causes this evolution of the tree, and for this reason the teacher here describes in the second verse:

यदिदं किञ्च जगत् सव प्राण एजति निःसृतम् ।

'All the animate and inanimate objects of this universe are nothing but the results of the vibration of the '*prana*'. This vibration of the *prana* is at the root of this tree and is also the cause of all phenomenal events which happen in this universe.

The word *prana* is the Sanskrit term which means 'the cosmic life-principle'. It is the universal life-principle. It is that which makes us living beings, and which produces motion or vibration. If we examine carefully this whole world, we will find that it is the result of motion or vibration. If there were no motion or vibration, this world would not exist. Whatever we see, hear, or perceive with our senses, is the result of vibration, or of some kind of motion ; and all these motions or vibrations, whether chemical, physical or mechanical, are caused by the *prana*. Of course, ordinary minds do not realize the nature of this universal vibration. We do not stop for a moment to think how these phenomena have taken place. Modern science has proved that everything is but the product of some kind of motion or vibration. The atoms and the molecules are constantly attracted towards one another, and repelled, and these attraction and repulsion of atoms and molecules pro-

duced this phenomenal universe, and the cause of that motion or attraction and repulsion is the *prana*.

Now the *prana* is that power which causes motion, which causes the atoms to attract other atoms, and which produces repulsion, gravitation, etc. Now, if this attraction or repulsion or gravitation ceases to exist, the whole world will be destroyed ; and if the vibration be stronger than it is at present, the whole world will be destroyed. The disaster that you have heard of and read about in the papers, regarding the earthquake in San Francisco,¹ which has created such great havoc. Now what is the cause of it ? It is nothing but motion or vibration. If the earth under our feet vibrates in an unusual way, all the foundations of these buildings will be shaken, and everything will be destroyed. When we think of this that the same vibration or motion, which is the cause of our life and existence, is the cause of our destruction, and when it is in a different degree, then it will create destruction, havoc etc., but within a certain limit, and it will give life and vitality, and will make everything harmonious. When we use the term 'harmonious', we mean also vibration under different conditions as well as harmony of forces and these vibrations are nothing but a certain from of motion.

The same gravitation which keeps us alive and attracts the molecules of the cells of our body, will kill a person who falls from the top of a roof or a tree. We know that we shall not be able to live without being subject to this law of gravitation, and the same law of gravitation creates havoc and destruction. If a building falls down, caused by gravitation, it will perhaps kill thousands of people.

Again what is fire ? That is also a certain state of vibration. When the vibration is low, there is heat, and when it is greater, it burns and destroys everything. What is electricity ? The electricity is nothing but vibration. When the atoms and the molecules vibrate in one particular direction, it produces electricity. But we do not think of this constant vibration or motion. Did it ever occur to you that when you were born, you were whirling round and round 25,000 miles in twenty-four hours. If you were at the equator, you were whirling

¹ This lecture was delivered in America on April 24th, 1906

25,000 miles a day from west to east, and we are whirling now, but we do not think of it. We think we are sitting still. But we are not sitting still, we are moving 25,000 miles in the space, and then again the whole earth is moving round the sun at the rate of 18 miles per second, and that means, 64,800 miles per hour and 1,555,200 miles per day. We do not think of this. Two persons are sitting in a train, and apparently they are sitting still, but in relation to the external objects they are moving very fast. Similarly, we are sitting still apparently in this room, but, in reality, we are moving very fast.

Now what is the cause of this motion? It is the *prana* or the life-force. Again, do we stop there, after moving round the sun? No, the whole planetary system is moving around some other system at the rate of 150,000,000 miles per second. And such is the condition under which we are living. We can never have rest. If we have absolute rest, there will be destruction and death, and there will be no life. Life means a kind of motion. Any living object which does not move or vibrate, we call dead. So the whole process of evolution is nothing but a certain state of vibration or motion. The external objects or the objects of senses, like colour, sound, smell, taste, and touch—all these are nothing but vibrations. Now what is colour? The colour is nothing but vibration of ether. If the vibration be 400 billions in a second, then we will see red colour. This is the lowest vibration, and the highest vibration is the violet colour; and so all colours that we see with our eyes, are nothing but vibrations of ether.

Again, what is sound? 11000 vibrations in a second will produce sound, and so with everything. If you examine properly, you will find that we are living in the ocean of ether which is constantly vibrating and moving in some form or other. Then again, what are our internal conditions? They are the results of vibrations too. It can also be asked: what is thought, what is intellect, and what is sensation and perception? In fact, they are nothing but vibrations. Thought is the result of the greatest vibration of the finer particles of matter. Such are the cases of sensations and perceptions, and they are all nothing but vibrations. Because if we analyze our perceptions, we will see that the rays of light which are constantly vibrating in a certain degree, when coming in touch with the retina,

produce an inverted image, just as you will find in a camera. The eye-balls are like lenses, and the retina is like the plate, where the inverted image is produced, and that image produces a certain kind of vibration in the optic nerves, and that vibration is carried by those nerves into the brain-cells, and there it produces some other kind of vibration in the molecules of those cells in the brain, and when that vibration is interpreted or translated by the sentient intelligent soul, then it becomes a sensation. In this way, we will be able to understand how the whole world is made up of vibrations, both internal and external. We cannot go beyond this vibration. When our lungs are moving, we breathe air from the atmosphere, and then that respiratory process keeps all other organs in motion, and then we have digestion, circulation, nerve currents and all other mental functions which we possess. In this ocean of ether, every particle of which is constantly vibrating, we live.

In any havoc or disaster, we think we have lost so much ; but have we really lost anything ? No, we cannot, and we have not. Because we cannot possess anything. Motion cannot possess motion, and vibration cannot possess vibration. How can we possess anything ? So long as we are living in the darkness of ignorance, we have the thought of ownership or possession—that this belongs to me. But who are you ? You are nothing but a mass of vibration. All these thoughts of ownership or possession start from ignorance.

A wise man can never possess anything, and that was the reason why Christ had no home to lay his head in. So every wise man is a child of nature, and he cannot possess or own anything, and, consequently, he cannot lose anything. There is no such thing as a loss in this world of vibration. Even this body we cannot possess all the time. The food which we take, is not ours. It producest a certain vibraton, and that again produces other vibrations, etc. Action and reaction are constantly going on, and we make mistakes. We grieve over certain things, but a wise man does not grieve over anything. It may sound a very heartless thing to say, but it is not heartless. When you look at an event from the standpoint of the univesse, you stop for a moment, and think whether you really have lost anything or not, and when you find that you cannot lose anything, that whatever is yours, is yours for ever, and what does not

belong to you, you can never possess, and that will bring a most comfortable thought, which is the most loving thought in our minds. It will make us feel divine.

God does not mourn over anything. And why should He mourn? He knows that nothing is in this universe. Even if certain things are burned into ashes, do you really think those things are lost in this universe? We may not use them, but they have other uses. They may not be for our use, but they may be of some other use in the universe. They may produce other things. And, in this way, if we reason, we shall find that there is no ground for grief or sorrow or for loss. The bodies may be destroyed, but the atoms and molecules of the bodies are not destroyed, the egos are not destroyed, and the souls are not destroyed. Perhaps you will hear the birth rate during this year, or during next year, will be decreased, because so many hundreds of people are destroyed by the earthquake at San Francisco.¹ They will be born again. Where do these new children come from? They are the old ones who lived in some other existence, or lived in animal forms.

So certain set of vibrations lead to another set of vibrations and in this way the world is moving. And the first expression of this phenomenal universe i.e. first manifestation begins with the vibration of that one cosmic energy. The cosmic energy exists from the beginningless past, and will continue to exist for ever, and that is the root of all forms. The suns, moons, and stars are coming into existence from this energy, and in the end, they will all go back to the same eternal stock. This earth has come into existence from the mass of nebulous matter which is a gaseous and vapoury substance, and, in the end, it will go back to that vapoury and ethereal substance. The disaster which has given such a shock to the world, would be compared to nothing, when this earth will come in touch with a comet, or some other star, or planet, and then everything will suddenly disappear. So we must be prepared to face that. We should think of the worst thing that could happen, and the scientists and astronomers always think of the worst conditions, and so they do not take these little things into account.

¹ This lecture was delivered at the time when there was an earthquake disaster in San Francisco in 1906. Hundreds of people lost their lives in that sudden havoc and disaster.

The disasters that are taking place in Italy from time to time, the eruptions of Mount Vesuvius and the results therefrom, what are they caused by? They are caused by that vibration and motion. So everything that exists in the universe, and everything that happens in this universe, is caused by motion or vibration of some kind, and the cause of that motion or vibration is the *prana*. The same *prana*, when it manifests itself in the external world, appears as heat, light, motion, gravitation, electricity, wind and other forces, as chemical and mechanical forces. They are all governed by the laws of the *prana*. And when the same *prana* manifests in the internal world, it produces thought, desires, feelings, emotions, etc. We are all governed by the laws of *prana*, and this *prana* is the universal substance. The first manifestation from this energy was *akasa*, the space. You may call that 'ether', but it is not exactly ether, but it is that which produces ether, or that which is the cause of ether. Modern science does not know what is the cause of ether, but when we shall be able to go a little further beyond ether, we shall be able to find a mass of energy, and that energy is extended. Space means *extension*, and ether, of course, fills that extended space; and that which produces *extension* is the energy, governed by the power of the *prana*.

There is one infinite mass of substance extended, and when it is worked upon by the force of the *prana*, the atoms begin to vibrate, and when they vibrate, they attract each other, and produce molecules, and those molecules again attract other molecules, and thus the elements of nature are produced. They are governed by laws. We may call them mechanical laws or methods, but they are all governed by higher intelligence. There is no such thing as absolutely unintelligent mechanical law or mechanical force. Even a machine which is produced by human ingenuity, will not be able to move by itself. It requires an intelligent hand to guide it, and to direct it, in order to get proper results.

This body is governed by that power of the *prana*, and that *prana* is not the same thing as any of the ordinary mechanical forces, or mechanical laws that we know of. It is not the same as unintelligent force of attraction, or molecular attraction, or gravitation, or electricity, or heat, or light, but it is a power which regulates, guides, and directs all mechanical

forces, and controls them. Now, what power is that by which we can control all mechanical forces? If we know the nature of that power, we shall understand what *prana* is. It is inseparable from intelligent entity. Intelligent entity cannot be dead, but it must be living. God is living Being and yet at the same time He is intelligent. Intelligence and life go together, and wherever there is intelligence there must be life, and wherever there is life there is some manifestation of intelligence. And as we know that there is no such thing as dead matter in this universe, as the whole world, as modern science has explained, is a living world. Atoms and molecules are living, because they have motion. Wherever there is motion of any kind, there is the manifestation of life, and, therefore, the whole world is living, and if the world is living, then there must be intelligence in the world, otherwise it cannot live, because life would not be the same thing as molecular attraction which exists in the inanimate objects.

Take an example of a chair. In a chair, there is electricity, light, heat, chemical force and vibration, but still there is no manifestation of life in it apparently. So we cannot say that there is that amount of intelligence in a chair as in a living protoplasm. For instance, protoplasm has life and the first activity you will notice in a protoplasm, is its *expansion* and *contraction*. That is the first expression of life-force, just as our lungs do, and that you will find in a mass of protoplasm. That motion is caused by the *prana*, the life-force. It 'is a mysterious force of nature. No one has understood it. If science fails to explain it, still it exists. Science only helps us in understanding it in a certain way as well as in presenting it in a certain way, and also in a certain form, so that our dull intellect can grasp, but it does not create anything new, nor can it destroy anything that exists. Science simply explains, and if science has failed to explain, it is not the fault of the substance that exists, but it is the fault of the intellect of the scientists who cannot discover the presence of substance yet. Their intellect is defective, and when their intellect will be improved, that mysterious substance will be revealed. So this *prana*, although it is not explained by science at present, will be explained in times to come perhaps. But it is already explained in Vedanta as the ultimate mother of all force.

Science has gone so far as to prove the correlation of forces. Science goes to prove that all forces are but various manifestations of one force, and what that force is, science does not explain definitely. Some of the scientists say, that is the intelligent mechanical force. Others hold that it is the intelligent force and when that intelligent force is atomic, it will be something like the *prana*, and that *prana* is the cause of all evolutionary processes. The cosmic evolution is caused by that force of the *prana*. As a seed contains the power of growth, so the seed of the universe is in that ocean of ether as a germ, and that germ contains the life-force, or the power of growth and evolution in a latent state. Gradually it begins to manifest itself, and when it begins to manifest itself, the cosmic evolution begins, and that is the manifestation of the tree of the phenomenal world. Gradually again the branches come out, and those branches cover all the visible and perceptible objects of the universe. Then human being comes last, because the human being is the finest production in the process of evolution. It is not the greatest, but the most subtle and most complex, because the organisation is very delicate and complex. The organisation of a highly developed man is also very delicate. If one has gone into the details of the brain-cells, how do they work, and how are they guided? In fact, no human mind can grasp the connections and the ramifications of the forces and powers that are working through the brain and nervous system.

Thus the Ruler of Death explains: "Whatever exists in this phenomenal world is but the manifestation of the vibration of the *prana*—यदिदं किञ्च जगत् सर्वं प्राण एजति निःसृतम्। This is not the first expression of the *prana* and of the projection or creation. Here you will notice the wonderfully scientific idea which these ancient seers of Truth had as regards 'creation'. They never said: 'Let there be light and there was light'. All those ideas are mythical, but the scientific explanation you will find nowhere so old and wonderfully correct and so rational at the same time, as you will find in the Vedas. It has been said in the Rig Veda: "At that time, before the beginning of creation, there was neither existence nor non-existence." Relative existence and relative non-existence did not exist.

"There was neither the space, nor the time." The darkness

was running over the darkness. What existed then? Neither the sun, the moon, nor the stars. No light was there. There was neither death nor, therefore, immortality". These are all relative terms. If you have death, you can have immortality, but if there were no death, how could there be immortality? Therefore these are all relative terms, one presupposes the existence of the other. Before creation or evolution, there was neither day nor night. All these came later. So what existed then? There was one eternal Being who was breathing but breathless—'*anītavatam*'. If you can understand what that breathless breathing is, you will know what life is, because life does not mean breath, but that which produces breathing, and that which causes the motion of the lungs, the motion of the diaphragm, the activity of the organs, and that is life. It is the outward expression. From that one universal substance all these mighty forces of nature came into being or manifestation. Force below and energy above the space was formed. So you see that description is most poetic. It is the most beautiful description of creation before the time of evolution that the world has ever received. And the seers of Truth, to whom that idea was revealed, were extremely rational, and they would not accept anything simply upon heresy, and there in those expressions they laid the foundation of true science, true philosophy and true religion. Nothing can change it; nothing can shake it. We may manufacture various kinds of religion and superstitious ideas, but still those we cannot change. We cannot destroy the truth, or the conception of truth which these ancient seers had.

So from that one eternal Being we have all come into existence by the power of the *prana*; and the external world, as also everything that is internal, everything that is subject and forms a part of our consciousness or conscious existence, has also come out from that one conscious self-shining Being. The external world forms only one-half of the universe. It is the objective world which we perceive with our senses. The other half is the subjective. That which forms a part of our mind, and which includes all sensations, perceptions, thoughts, ideas, emotions, percepts, concepts, will-power, intellect and other functions of our inner nature, is subjective, and that cannot be explained by the objects of perception or external objects. We may say anything about the mechanical process

of the *prana*, and nothing can disobey. Are we not obeying the laws of gravitation ? Are we not obeying the laws of attraction and repulsion constantly ? Yes, we are obeying it perhaps unconsciously. So the earth is obeying the law of gravitation. The earth cannot disobey that law. Nothing can disobey the law of gravitation, and that idea has been given most beautifully in a poetic way.

The *Upanishad* says: "That eternal Being is a great terror ; every animate and inanimate object obeys Him, i.e. obeys His law. All the objects, even the sun, moon and stars are obeying the command of that infinite Being, consciously or unconsciously, they cannot transcend it".²

Try to transcend the law of gravitation, but you cannot exist. If the sun tries to transcend the law of gravitation, where will it be ? It will no longer be the sun. If the earth rebels against the same law and says: "No, I am greater than the sun, the sun must move around me and I shall remain stationary", the earth will not exist. So you see as a master who holds an iron rod in his hand and commands everything, so the infinite and universal Being is commanding everything, and everything is bound to obey. He who understands this secret, transcends death, and becomes immortal. When we know that infinite Being under whose command everything is doing its duty and performing its function. When we understand Him and His nature and the laws under which we are governed, then we have known everything of the universe, and we have understood our immortal nature. Then we have known that death cannot reach us. Death can only attack anything that has form, and so long as we are thinking that we are one with the body, one with form, we are subject to death, we have fear of death. But if we can once think of ourselves as formless and still we have existence and individual personality, but no form, then we have transcended death, we have become deathless. And that is the great difficulty that we find in our way: the attachment to the form, to the bodies, to external things, and

२। महद्भयं वज्रमुद्यतं य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥

भयादस्याभिस्तपति भयात् तपति मूर्यः ।

भयादिन्द्रश्च वायुश्च मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः ॥—कठ.उपनिषद् २।२।३

to objects of sense, sense perception, colour, taste, touch, which makes us slave to the form, and, consequently, the wings of our souls are clipped and we cannot go into that flight, and cannot take flight and soar high above in the infinite space of the absolute Reality. We come down on the plane of the senses, and become attached, and through that attachment we get fear of death ; and then we have thought of gain and loss. But when we realize our real essence which is nameless and formless, then we transcend the thought of gain or loss. So we should not be self-deluded, and, therefore, we must open our eyes and see things as they are in reality.

"From the terror of Brahman or that infinite Being, the fire gets heat and light, the sun gets heat and light, the clouds shower rain, the wind blows and death runs from place to place"¹ These are all obeying the laws of the *prana*, which is also the laws of Nature (*Prakriti*). In fact, those are nothing but the products of these forces which are governed by the laws of that eternal Being. But what are these laws ? They are nothing but the moulds, in which the *prana* is operating in Nature, and, consequently, nothing can transcend that infinite Being ; and there comes the solid and rational foundation of true religions. When you want to get the idea of an infinite Being who is the Governor of all vibrations as well as of all evolution, and whose laws no one can transcend, then comes the conception of the infinite Nature, and at that moment we begin to feel how small we are. and, consequently, we kneel and bow down before that terror. That, whom the sun obeys, the moon obeys, and no one can transcend, must be infinitely larger, infinitely greater, and infinitely more powerful than our individual ego ; and, consequently, when we are in distress or trouble, we pray to Him, we worship Him, and try to overcome our grief and sorrow by thinking about Him. There is the root or beginning of religion. So you see that philosophy and religion go hand in hand. This religion is the natural outcome of science and philosophy. It is not man-made religion, but it is universal and eternal religion. The *Upanishad* says: "That eternal infinite Being if we can know before the dis-

solution of the body, then we have reached the highest goal, then we have become immortal".¹

Now the Ruler of Death is explaining the mystery of death: how one can become immortal by knowing that source or root of the immortal universe, knowing that the *prana* is governing everything and the whole world is but the product of vibration, and the source of the universe is the Terror. No one can transcend His laws, but everyone must obey Him. If we know this and realize it, then death cannot attack us. Then we think of ourselves as formless and as part of the formless infinite Being, which is the intelligent source that governs the universe.

In fact, we govern ourselves in a smaller way, and so we are the governor of our bodies. If we were not a part of the universal Governor or Ruler of the universe, then we could not govern even on a small scale, and this is one of the proofs by which we can know that as we are the governors of our bodies in a small way, so we are parts of the Governor of the universe. The same power is manifested in us. Therefore we are children of God as well as the parts of the infinite Being. Then we know that we have transcended death, the realm of death is below us, it cannot hold us, and we are above and beyond death. And those who do not realize it, are born again in the realm of creation.

¹ Cf. the *Katha-Upanisad*, 2.3.4.

CHAPTER XVIII

END OF WORLDLINESS MEANS THE BEGINNING OF REALIZATION

The Ruler of Death said. "If anyone can realize the absolute Being in this life, before dissolution of the body, he attains to Immortality, and those who cannot realize the Highest, the true Self, will be born again in the realm of creation".¹

It is very necessary to realize the Highest, the true Self, the *Atman*, the Absolute in this life, because if we do not try to realize it in this very life there may perhaps be very few opportunities in future. The present is the best and nearest to us, and those who cannot make the best use of the present will remain under the bondage of the law of action and reaction, law of *karma*, and will not be able to transcend the laws that bind us on this plane—the laws that have brought us here and will bring us again.

The attainment of immortality does not begin in the grave, but it begins here, right in this life, and those who have realized their immortal nature, the absolute true Self, have become immortal. The Ruler of Death gives the reason why it is necessary for everyone to realize the Highest in this life, because the realization in this life is different from what we can have after departing from this plane. He says, 'in this plane' (*'iha ched'*); that is, when we have human bodies on this plane, we can realize the Absolute or our true Self, just as clearly as we can see our own face in a mirror. As we see our own face in a mirror distinctly and perfectly, so we can see our true Self, the Absolute, on the mirror of our intellect or heart clearly.

¹ इह चेदशकद्वोद्धं प्राक्-शरीरस्य विस्मसः ।

ततः मर्गेषु लोकेषु शरीरत्वाय कल्पते ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।४

In his commentary Sankara says तच्चेह जीवन्नेव चेत् यदि अशक्त—शक्तः सन् जानाति इत्येतत् भयकारणं ब्रह्म बोद्धमवगन्तुं—प्राक् पूर्वं शरीरस्य विस्मसोऽवसन्नतात् पतनात् संसारवन्धनात् विमुच्यते । * * तस्माच्छरीरविस्मसनात् प्रागात्मावबोधाय यत्न आस्थेयः ॥”

But those who realize the Highest in the realm of ancestors after death, cannot see it so distinctly. They can see just as we see faces in dreams. In the realm of ancestors, all the meetings and communions with our relatives and friends will be just as we meet our friends, and see their faces in a dream. That vision in a dream is not so distinct and perfect as the picture on a mirror, and that kind of vision will be revealed to those who enter into the realm of ancestors (*pitrloka*).¹

In the angelic plane, i.e., in the realm of those celestial beings who enjoy heavenly pleasures of various kinds, the realization would be, perhaps, not so clear as in a dream even, but as we see our own shadows in the water. When we look at our faces in the water, we see the reflection, but that is not so clear even as in our dream state, and that kind of vision will take place in those heavens, where all the celestial pleasures one can enjoy. You know there are various grades of heavens in celestial regions, different realms, lower and higher. These are the lower realms in the heavens. The highest realm or plane of the heavens is the *brahmaloka*, the realm of the First-Born Lord of the universe. This First-Born Lord is known in the *Purana* as Brahma, the Hiranyagarbha. That is the highest realm from the phenomenal standpoint. In that realm, however, very few can realize the Absolute, and those who do realize it, realize it very distinctly, just as we see the reflection of the sun on the bright mirror. But very few can enter into that realm. Those who have performed good deeds and lived righteous and unselfish lives and have sacrificed their self-interest on the alter of humanity, and also have obtained perfection in this life, can go there and enjoy that divine vision which is the ideal. But next to that is the vision which can be obtained in this life, and it will be wise to attain perfection in this very life.²

यथादर्शं तथात्मनि यथा स्वप्ने तथा पितृलोके ।

यथाप्सु परीव दृश्ये तथा गन्धर्वलोके,

च्छायापयोरिव ब्रह्मलोके ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।५

* Regarding it, Sankara says in his commentary: "यस्माद्विद्वद्वा-

त्मनी दर्शनं आदर्शस्थस्येव मुख्यं स्पष्टमुपपद्यते, न लोकान्तरेषु ब्रह्मलोकादन्यत्र ।

The realm of ancestors (*pitriloka*) and the other lower realms of the heavens are not so satisfactory. They will not reveal to us the highest ideal, or the highest Truth. We may meet our relatives and friends after death, but that meeting our friends and relatives would not amount to much, just as it did not on this plane. We meet our relatives and friends here, but we are not satisfied, and we want something more. Our longing for realization is not satiated and gratified after meeting our friends and relatives. Similarly, after death, if we go to the realm of ancestors and our forefathers come and we meet them, there may be temporary satisfaction and happiness, but that will not last long. Our longing would be to go higher, and that longing will never stop, until the highest goal is reached. It is the innate tendency of the soul to reach the highest, to be perfect, and to be one with the divine Being, one with the Supreme; and, for that reason, we can never remain satisfied with anything which we may experience on any of these intermediate planes. Just as a man may become a millionaire, and yet his longing is to become a multi-millionaire. There is no satisfaction of greed or ambition and no one has ever succeeded. The more we get, the more we want, and there is no end of it. If a conqueror conquers one nation, he wants to conquer the whole world. Read the lives of Alexander, Julius Caesar, and Napoleon, and you will find their high ambition killed them. The ambition of all the great politicians, statesmen and merchants also killed them. Because ambition will never be satisfied, and it will never bring happiness to the soul. So the wise man does not chase the phantoms of hope, because he realizes that this is not the aim of life. The aim of life is different. The aim of the soul is not that, but to know its immortal nature which will last throughout eternity. This

स च दुष्प्रापः। कथम्? इत्युच्यते—यथा आदर्शे प्रतिबिम्बभूतं आत्मानं पश्यति लोकः अत्यन्तविविक्तम्; तथा इह आत्मानि स्वबुद्धावादर्शवर्णिर्मलीभूतायां विविक्तमात्मनो दर्शनं भवतीत्यर्थः। यथा स्वप्ने अविविक्तं जाग्रद्वत्समोद्भूतम्, तथा पितृलोके अविविक्तमेव दर्शनं आत्मनः कर्मफलोपभोगासक्तत्वात्। * * ज्ञायतपयोरिव अत्यन्तविविक्तं ब्रह्मलोक एवैकस्मिन्। स च दुष्प्रापः अत्यन्तविशिष्टकर्मज्ञानसाध्यत्वात्। तस्मादात्मदर्शनाय इहैव यत्नः कर्तव्य इत्यभिप्रायः।”

body will go to pieces. This material body is nothing. We ordinarily think this body is the same as the soul, but that is a great mistake, and that happens due to our ignorance. The body is manufactured by the soul, and our true Self is the essence of the soul. Even mind is partly material,¹ and it is the vibration of finer matter. They all may go to pieces. The body may be destroyed, but the soul, the true Self, will continue to remain just as it is now. It does not change under any conditions, but very few can realize that true Self. Whosoever has realized the true Self, has become immortal, and has overcome all fear of death. The fear of death proceeds from ignorance, attachment to the body, to possessions, and to things which we do not possess in reality.

The more we are attached to those things, the greater fear we have, when we think of losing them. All fear proceeds from that. But a wise man is free from fear. He has no fear, because he does not possess anything, and not even his own body. He cannot have fear, because he knows that the material body is nothing but an eddy in the ocean of ether, and it is constantly vibrating. The atoms and molecules are rushing in from outside and rushing out from inside. So we are in a continuous influx and outflux of material particles, and each particle is vibrating and rotating and attracting other particles. In this eddy of atoms and molecules we are living. And this eddy is that which we call our body or our self. But, in reality, our Self is different, and it is higher, more eternal and immortal and indestructible, and when we realize that Truth in this body, we attain that realization. It would be foolish on our part not to make the strongest attempt to accomplish that, and, therefore, the Vedas, the *Upanishads*, and the Vedanta philosophy teach for the good of humanity that every individual soul must try to realize its immortal nature before the dissolution of the body, because if we do not do this, we would lose the greatest and best opportunity that has presented itself to us. But, of course, ordinary mortals who are craving for material gain and prosperity, will not listen to such instructions and advice. They will follow their own courses of their own mind and tendency, and no one can stop that. But there are very few here and

¹ The mind or *antahkarana* is the product of nescience, and though it possesses intelligence, yet it is regarded as matter (*jada*).

those few who have gone through all this experience and have realized that this world is transitory, that the pleasures of this world are not worth having, they alone are ready for that highest realization. They do not crave for material things and prosperity, they let everything go and they sacrifice, they withdraw their minds from those things and rise on a higher plane and become God-like divine. God is that which has not any attachment to material objects, and if we wish to become God-like, we should first of all overcome that selfish attachment to the body and sense pleasures and possessions, and realize that we are children of the immortal Bliss, that we live in holy Eternity. Nothing can destroy us. Fire cannot burn us, air cannot dry us; water cannot moisten us and swords cannot pierce us. Whosoever has realized this has become perfect, has become divine even in this life. This the Ruler of Death describes more elaborately here by showing that true Self, the *Atman*, is above and beyond all mental and physical conditions.

He who realizes his true Self as distinct and separate from sense perceptions, from sensations, from mental conditions, from intellectual functions, and who understands that separateness that these mental conditions, intellectual functions and sensations and sense perceptions are separate from our true Self, that they do not make up our Self, or the *Atman*, or our true Being, but they proceed from that common source as powers, as manifestations of latent powers, but he is the soul itself, the true Self, is above and beyond any sense perception or particular mental function is free from grief and sorrow, and he never grieves¹

The *Upanishad* says: "Mind is superior to senses, intellect is superior to mind, the sum total of *Mahattatva* or *Hiranyagarbha* is superior to intellect, the *avyakta* (*Isvara*) is superior to *Mahattatva*. Again the transcendent *Purusha* is superior to

¹ इन्द्रियाणां पृथग् भावमुदयास्तमयौ च यत् ।

पृथगुत्पद्यमानानां मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।६

Why the wise and realized souls do not grieve or mourn for anything, Sankara clarifies its cause by saying: "आत्मनो नित्यैकत्वभावत्वान्यभिचाराच्छोकादिकारणत्वानुपपत्तः । तथा च श्रुत्यन्तरं—'तरति शोकमात्मवित् इति ।'"

the *avyakta*. Knowing Him, realizing the *Purusha*, men cut asunder the knots of *samsara* and attain immortality (*moksha*)".²

If we separate our immortal Self from sense perceptions, from mental functions, nothing can affect our true Self. If we identify ourselves with that which is beyond all mental and physical changes, then everything that happens to the body, or to our senses, or to our mind, cannot reach the Soul, cannot affect the Soul, and consequently all grief, sorrow, suffering, and even enjoyment are either on the sense plane or on the mental plane; and, therefore, the wise man is never affected by those changes of the body, senses and mind.

In this way we shall have to analyse our whole being; then we shall be able to get at the Absolute, the eternal Part, the immortal Essence, which is hidden under the cover of all sensations, mental functions and intellectual functions. First we see that this body is a mass of sense activity, and these sensations exist in sense organs, and these sense organs produce certain vibrations, and the vibration affect our mind, our intellect and understanding. But if we have no understanding, no power of discrimination, then we do not understand, do not know the difference between one emotion and another. That part which can distinguish the feeling of pain from the feeling of pleasure, the feeling of love from the feeling of anger, and all other various mental functions is *intellect* or *buddhi*. That intellect is just like a mirror which catches the reflection of all the different functions of the sense organs and sensations and perceptions, ideas, emotions and other things that occur within us, within our mind. So mind, which includes all emotions, volition, etc., is not the same as our intellect or understanding. *Intellect* is that by which we discriminate and compare one thing with another. That is *cognition*, and that power of cognition may be called *intellect* ²

¹ इन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनो मनसः सत्त्वमुत्तमम् ।

सत्त्वादधि महानात्मा महातोऽव्यक्तमुत्तमम् ॥

अव्यक्तात् परः पुरुषो व्यपकोऽलिङ्ग एव च ।

तं ज्ञात्वा मुच्यते जन्तुरमृतत्वञ्च गच्छति ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।८

² Cf. Author's discussion on *Consciousness* in the Chap. II of his *True Psychology*.

Now, that intellect again is a part of the cosmic intellect or the understanding of the cosmic ego, the First-Born Lord of the universe. Cosmic ego is greater than our individual intellect, greater than our individual understanding, because it includes all the individual egos and intellects. It is the one complete Whole, and we are but so many small parts, minute parts of that infinite Whole. It is called *Hiranyagarbha* (*Brahma, the saguna Isvara*). It is the same as the *mahan Atman*. 'Mahan' means 'great', and 'Atman' means 'that being', 'that exists'. The *Mahat* is another manifestation of the *avyakta*, the unmanifested primordial energy. Here two words cannot coalesce, but they are kept separate. Even beyond the cosmic ego we shall have to go if we wish to realize the absolute Brahman, for God¹ is not the highest, He is rather lower in status than the Absolute, the source and the substratum.

Beyond that cosmic ego is the undifferentiated energy which produces intellect, and which is the mother of intellect, understanding, mind, mental functions, as also of the material and physical forces of nature. That is One². There is no manifestation other than that One. The first manifestation in the process of evolution is the cosmic ego. That is the highest manifestation. That cosmic ego divides and subdivides itself and produces innumerable reflections or images. Each of these images is called a 'human soul' (*vyashti jvatman*), but the cosmic ego as a whole (*samashhti jvatman*) is the first manifestation and before that manifestation took place there was this undifferentiated energy (*avyakta Isvara*).³ The universe did not

¹ In fact, God bears the same status as that of cosmic ego (*Brahman* and *Isvara*). But here it may be asked as to what is the difference between *Brahma* and *Isvara*. According to Advaita or non-dualistic Vedanta, *Isvara* is the unmanifested or *avyakta sakala* and *saguna* (qualified) Brahman whereas *Brahma* is the manifested or *vyakta sakala saguna* Brahman. The transcendental Brahman is *nirguna* and *nishkala* and it is absolutely different from the *saguna* Brahman in stage or status, but in essence it is non-different from both the aspects of the *saguna* Brahman.

² The Swami intends to say that the cosmic ego *Brahma*, or the manifested and differentiated Brahman is inferior in status to unmanifested and undifferentiated energy which is known as *Isvara*, the *avyakta*. In Vedanta, the cosmic ego, *Brahma* has been compared to a dream (*svapna*) and *Isvara* as deep sleep (*sushupti*), whereas the *Virat*-Brahman or the gigantic cosmos is the awakening state (*jagrat*).

³ It should be borne in mind that though both *Brahma*, the manifested Brahman and *Isvara*, the unmanifested Brahman are known as 'cosmic ego', yet the undifferentiated energy *Isvara* or *avyakta* has been designated both as 'cosmic ego' and the 'first and highest manifestation of evolution' (*prathama Purusha*) by Vedanta.

exist then in its present form, but it existed in a germ state, in a seed form (*vyākareṇa*). All the forces and powers of nature were potential in that state (unmanifested), as the energy remains potential in coal, but when we burn it, it becomes actual. Now coal may produce tremendous energy, may make a fast train run so many miles in an hour. Where did that energy come from? It comes from that coal. Of course, coal contained that energy in a potential form, but it became actual when it burned. Then the heat was produced, and from heat steam was produced by coming in touch with water. So indirectly that potential energy has been the cause. If there had been no heat, there would have been no steam, and if there were no coal there could not have been heat. So nothing has come from outside. All the energy that has been manifested in the form of force existed already in the coal, and that was the potential state. Similarly, when the universe goes back into that primordial energy, it remains potential. The tremendous energy that is radiating all the time from the sun, was latent in that mass of energy before the beginning of evolution. So nothing has come into existence suddenly. Everything was there, and everything is there, and nothing is wasted.

Many of the scientists think that the sun's energy is wasted in the infinite space. It is not wasted, but it is stored up again in another form. There is neither gain nor loss in this universe, everything is complete. But when we look at the individual points, we may say that particular manifestation has gained or lost just as coal has lost its energy, when it is burned. But that energy is in the universe in another form. When we look at that energy from the standpoint of the universe, we find nothing is lost; but when we look at it from the standpoint of the particular substance, then we think it is lost. But, in reality there is neither gain nor loss in this universe. Take the energy that has been lost in the disaster at San Francisco. Every individual thinks he has suffered a great deal of loss, but in reality he has not lost anything. That is the point where we should come eventually, and philosophy will teach us that. The more we advance in realizing the vastness and the grandeur of the universe and the eternal Truth, the less we shall worry about trifling things like gain or loss. If all human beings are destroyed, even then nothing is lost. When we shall understand that,

then we have understood the eternal Truth which is the unchangeable Reality. We are coming to that understanding. Science is pushing us to that end, and nature teaches us by giving hard blows by snatching away the nearest and dearest things that we cling to and become attached to. Nature tells us that it is not your thing. That thing belongs to nature, and it is not yours. Do not be foolish, and do not be like a baby. Wake up, and do not claim those things which do not belong to you. And that knowledge each individual soul will have to learn before it can reach perfection.

"Beyond that mass of undifferentiated energy is the Absolute, is the Brahman, is our true Self".¹ Now, that is not the same as energy. Modern science has gone so far as the unknowable energy. Beyond that energy science does not know anything.² Even that energy is a matter of supposition. Of course, it cannot be proved, except by inference. But beyond that energy is the Highest, and science will never reach it, because it is beyond the domain of science. Science can only infer from sense perceptions. The realm of perceptions is the realm of science, and that which is beyond the state of energy, would be the realm of metaphysics or philosophy, and that is not of science. Consequently, science will never reveal it. But science will help in understanding the true nature of it. It will classify the events, and make better theories and hypothesis, and those theories and hypothesis will help us in understanding that which is beyond the unmanifested undifferentiated energy.

"That energy is called by various names". Think of the time when this was taught ! Centuries before Christ this has been handed down from time immemorial. Some people think these books were written perhaps 700 or 800 years before Christ. But these books existed through memory, for ages or centuries before that time, and so this knowledge also existed. See how scientific the demonstrations and conclusions were. In the last chapter, I explained how this whole world was described and explained as the result of the vibration. Show me any other

¹ "अव्यक्तात् परः पुरुषो" ।—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।८

² But eminent scientists like Max Plank and others assure us that in future science will be able to unlock the highest mystery, which is the subject-matter of philosophy, and in this way science and philosophy will meet together one day.

scripture or oldest writings, where you will find such explanations which are absolutely scientific and absolutely philosophical. The Jews began to conceive of a little philosophy after eight centuries A.D., when atheism and agnosticism began to prevail ; but before that time they had mythology. The stories of creation, as you all find in the Old Testament, existed in all countries, but they are not philosophical, and those who tried to explain them through science, have failed again and again. But compare those stories with this description, which will help you to understand Herbert Spencer's philosophy in a different way, and, in fact, the minds of those great thinkers of ancient times were more purified than those who are living on the sense plane today and philosophically speculating with lots of instruments, machines, and using other brains. But these were great seers of Truth. They did not have any instruments. They realized this, and felt it, and their perception was so perfect that whatever they felt was truth. And here today Herbert Spencer leads to what ? To dry agnosticism, to materialism, and perhaps to atheism ; and the conclusions of these great seers lead to the most beautiful conception of one universal Being, who is the goal of all religions. Their conclusion satisfies the highest aspirations of human souls, uplifts the souls, and makes the souls rise above all mundane affairs, and enter into the abode of infinite Being and immortal Bliss. Such is the difference. And the *Upanishad* says: "By knowing that which is beyond the undifferentiated energy, the mortal, the living soul attains to immortality".¹³ Now, we shall have to go beyond the cosmic ego, beyond our intellect, beyond the undifferentiated energy (*avyakta*), and starting from there, we will have to enter into the realm of the Absolute, and then we shall find the immortal Being. Everything else is subject to change, and is subject to death. Death means change. We are dying every minute and every moment. After seven years every atom or molecule of our system is renewed, you are not the same being again. Your baby-body is dead and gone, your child-body is gone, and those who have reached beyond forty, the body of their youth is dead and gone also. So why should we,

१३ । अव्याक्तत्तु परः पुरुषो व्यक्तोऽल्लिङ्ग एव च ।

यं ज्ञात्वा मुच्यते जन्तुरमृतत्वञ्च गच्छति ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।८

remain attached to these physical conditions ? We must know this, open our eyes, and begin to feel that which is unchangeable in the midst of changes.

“But this absolute Being cannot be perceived by sense powers ; the eye cannot reveal It”. You have heard that the infinite Being cannot be seen face to face by the sense of eye. It is said in the Bible and in all the scriptures of the world. The reason you will find in Vedanta, because the senses cannot reach there, even the mind cannot reach there, the senses are too gross, not because God was so majestic, and His glory so dazzling. From mythological story we know that God was seen, His back was seen by Moses, and not His face. If Moses could see His back, why not His face ? Those stories do not appeal to a rational mind. But when you say that the senses are too gross and too material, that will appeal to sensible persons. His back could be seen, but not His face, and those were all allegorical and not philosophical statements.

“His form cannot be perceived by the senses”.¹⁴ No one can see the absolute Being through eyes—through the powers of sight or of hearing. The eye here stands for all the sense powers. “He can be realized only by the purified mind, or by the purified heart”.¹⁵ When the heart and the mind, the inner nature (*antara-prakriti*) are purified, they are purified from all the imperfections of selfishness: earthly desires, sense powers, etc., and that purified heart or purified mind can lead the intellect further up, can make the intellect grasp a glimpse of the Absolute—not the whole of It, but still a glimpse, and when that glimpse is had, the whole intellect is transformed

१४। न संदृशे तिष्ठति रूपस्य न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चिन्नैनम् ।

—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।९

१५। हृदा मनीषा मनमाभिविल्लसो य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ।

—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।९

By the word ‘manasa’ Sankara means *mananarupena*—

“मननरूपेण

स म्यगदर्शनेन । अभिविल्लसोऽभिसमर्थितोऽभिप्रकाशित इत्येतत्” । Anandagiri

says in the glossary.

“अविकल्पयित्रयोति । विषयकल्पनाशन्यया ब्रह्मास्मीत्यविषयतयैव ब्रह्मभावव्यञ्जिकया महावाक्यात्पत्या बुद्धिवृत्त्याज्ञातु शक्यत इति सम्बन्धः” ।

and simultaneously the ego is transformed.¹⁶ That is the transfiguration of Christ.

Christ means ego beyond mind and which is transfigured into the Divine. That transfiguration will take place in every individual. The ego is transfigured into the Divine by *sadhana* or spiritual practice. No more desires for earthly things and attachment to the body remain and that would be the sign of the transfiguration. If the body goes to pieces, the soul does not claim one particular form as its own. It gives it up, because it withdraws itself from the material connections. When the soul is transfigured into the divine Being, the glory of the Infinite, the eternal Spirit shines upon the soul, and the majesty, grandeur, and omniscience begin to dawn upon the horizon of the individual ego, and with the glimpse of that beautiful glory and grandeur and omniscience the individual ego enters into the realm of immortality and never returns. Then he has transcended all laws, and nothing can hold him back. That is the goal and the ultimate goal of human life. Then he explains how that goal can be attained. If the sense powers cannot reveal it, if purified mind or heart can reach the Absolute, what shall we do then?

Then Yama, the Ruler of Death, describes first that state in which the Absolute will be realized: "When all the sense powers are silenced; when the mind is still; when the thoughts do not disturb the peace—in that state the glory of the infinite Being is realized and the omniscience dawns upon the horizon".¹⁷ That state is called the *samadhi*. All the sense perceptions will be quiet, and there will be no disturbance. All the intellectual functions will be stilled, yet it is not the same state as death, because they will all remain latent. As, after a

¹⁶ The transformation of intellect or ego means the revealing of the Divine consciousness (*suddha-jnana*). Sri Ramakrishna said that *suddha-mana* and *suddha-jnana* are one and the same.

१७। यदा पञ्चावतिष्ठन्ते ज्ञानानि मनसा सह ।

बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टते तामाहुः परमां गतिम् ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।१०

By 'pancha-jnanani' Sankara means. "ज्ञानार्थत्वात् श्रोत्रादीनि इन्द्रियाणि ज्ञानान्युच्यन्ते । * * तेन संकल्पादिब्यावृत्त नान्तःकरणेन । बुद्धिश्च अव्यवसाय-रूपक्षणा न विचेष्टते स्वव्यापारेषु न चेष्टते न व्याप्रियते" ।

tremendous storm of rain and thunder there prevails calmness, so after incessant *sadhana* or spiritual practice that calmness will prevail within us and then the bright sunshine of realization will come. We are now under the storm of passions, rain of desires and ambitions and hurly-burly of this busy rush of earthly life, competition for bread and butter. All this we are going through. Do not expect to reach perfection in this state of rush. First quiet your minds, still your senses, and enter into the abode of peace. Then begin to look upward. There you will see the silver fringe of the bright cloud, and that will burst and the self-effulgent Sun (*Atman*) will be revealed.

There he describes how that state can be attained: "That state can be attained through the practice of Yoga".¹⁸ Yoga means the method of getting concentration, or it can be said that Yoga is concentration. By concentration, i.e., by withdrawing our mind from external objects, by gaining self-control, by controlling our mental conditions and passions and by holding our senses in a peaceful state, if we remain well-balanced, then we attain to perfection. Many people who try to practise Yoga, get unbalanced. Because they have not strength and will-power to bring these mad elephants of the senses and the passions under control. It requires tremendous force and strength to bring these wild elephants, intoxicated with liquors of desire and passion of worldliness under control, and ordinary mortals who have no guide and no strength, cannot accomplish it; and, therefore, he says: "Remain well-balanced. Keep mind, intellect and senses in perfect harmony, and keep them under control. Then that high state will come".¹⁹ By this it does not mean that the man who has lost all powers like a plant, all passions and sense powers will reach the highest. No, by this it means that all sense powers will remain in perfect condition, and transmute those forces on the higher plane, and keep them under the power of your will. Then the attainment to the peace eternal will come in the *samadhi*, and that is the goal of human life.

In the state of Yoga, there is the beginning of realization and the end of worldliness. Where worldliness ends, the

१८। तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम् ।—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।११

१९। अप्रमत्तस्तदा भवति योगो हि प्रभवाप्ययौ ।—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।११

highest realization begins. If we remember this, and practise Yoga and self-control diligently, and remember that the highest ideal is beyond mind and intellect, and the realm of immortality is beyond undifferentiated energy, then slowly but steadfastly we will march onward, and will not stop until the goal is reached, and shall attain to perfection and blessedness.

CHAPTER XIX

REALIZATION OF THE ABSOLUTE

In the last chapter, we noticed what the Ruler of Death said to Nachiketa, the young seeker after Truth, regarding the means, by which the absolute Being can be realized, and Immortality be attained. That means is the practice of Yoga. And we also noticed that through the practice of Yoga the realization of the true and divine Self can be acquired.

The practice of Yoga leads to that consciousness of the Supreme, which cannot be acquired by any other method. By this Yoga, of course, we do not mean any particular kind of Yoga, but, like a generic term, it includes all the different methods that are described in the Vedanta philosophy.

Why is it necessary to practise Yoga ? Can we not see the Absolute with our eyes ?—such questions come up in our minds very often. These questions also arose in the mind of Nachiketa, and so the Ruler of Death said: “Neither by speech and words, nor by mind, can this realization be acquired, nor by the power of sight ;”¹ because the Absolute is not only beyond the reach of our physical body, but also of our senses, sense powers, and the powers by which we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. These powers cannot reveal the transcendental absolute Reality. By these powers we can grasp only appearances of things. We can never perceive the Reality with our senses, but we perceive only the appearances of the Reality. We see the Absolute as it appears to us. Senses are too gross, and the vibration of senses are too thick, and so they cannot reach the supersensible Absolute. The words cannot describe it, because our words are too imperfect. Even that which we think or imagine, cannot be expressed in words. We cannot express even our feelings in words. Take, for instance, love ; we cannot express what love is in words. It is impossible to express in words, hatred or any feeling like kindness perfectly. But we can feel much more than we can say. Many times, when we are absolutely

silent, we have the deepest feelings, and our heart's inner nature is filled with emotions, but when we try to express them in words, we fail, and that shows that if our ordinary feelings are on the human plane, and if the human affection and emotions cannot be expressed perfectly by words, how can we clarify the Absolute, the supreme Being by words? Words cannot reach the Absolute. So whenever we try to express the nature of true Self, we fail, and that is the reason why we have so many contradictory statements like: "He is this", "He is not this", "He is knowable", and "He is unknowable". If we say knowable, that means a certain class of things, and by that term we bring the absolute Being within that class. But the absolute Being cannot be confined within any class, because any kind of classification makes Him imperfect and limited. Again when we say that He is unknowable, we make Him transcend the realm of the knowable; and in this way, whenever we try to describe the Absolute, we contradict ourselves. We cannot help it, because where all contradictions end, there is the realm of the Absolute. All contradictions are on the relative plane, just as much as all assertions. So assertion and negation must end in the Absolute. Or, in other words, our positive assertions and positive and negative statements will coincide or harmonize, and will become neutralized in the Absolute, just as positive and negative poles of a magnet are neutrals at the neutral point, where it is neither positive nor negative. So the absolute Being is the neutral point in this phenomenal world, where the positive and negative sides harmonize, and become neutrals and equals, and there is the realm of the Absolute.² So whenever we try to reach that, how can we have any positive or negative idea? So words fail.

Even thoughts cannot reach that transcendental plane. In fact, the Absolute is beyond all thoughts. We may think perhaps that by purifying our thoughts we will be able to make our thoughts reach the Absolute; but we may try in vain for ages, and still the Absolute will not be brought within the realm of thoughts. All thoughts will end in the Absolute, and one thought will be overcome by another, until our thoughts become infinite in range. Thoughts cannot reach it, and the

² Cf Author's *Self-knowledge* (1944), pp 17-18

mental feelings, perceptions, qualities, and all other mental modifications cannot apprehend the Highest. Now, if this be the condition, then how are you going to apprehend the Absolute? How are you going to realize our true Self? The *Upanishad* says: "Regarding that absolute Truth, one can only say that He is, or it is."³ We may say that the Absolute exists, and beyond that we cannot say anything. But those who deny its existence, can never know it. Those who have this feeling that the Absolute exists, can make attempts to know it, and can gain the realization in the end. But those who deny entirely its existence, will never make any attempt, and will never be able to reach it, until that mental condition is changed or transfigured.

The Absolute is beyond all thoughts, all the subtle substances and finest things that we can grasp or comprehend. The Absolute is the cause of all, yet it is causeless. It has no cause, and at the same time it cannot be confined within the laws of causation. Or it can be said to be the causeless cause, as the German philosopher Fichte says. It does not begin to be the cause, otherwise there would be a change in Him. But it is beyond the realm of cause and effect, yet no other thing exists in the universe, which may be called the cause of the universe. All things proceed from the absolute Substance or Being, and those who have their minds fixed upon it as existent, can realize it, can understand it and acquire perfect consciousness about it.

The *Upanishad* says: "Those who hold such ideas, that the Brahman, the Absolute, is existence, and it is not a negation or nothingness, but is existence. It is the absolute Existence, and we can attain to it."⁴ Now, there are some people who believe that this whole universe has come out of nothingness, and in the beginning, there was nothing, and from nothing the

३। अस्तीति ब्रूवतोऽन्यत्र कथं तदुपलभ्यते ।—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।१२

Sankara says: "तस्माज्जगतो मूलमात्मा अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धव्य ।"

४। अस्त्येत्येवोपलब्धव्यस्तत्त्वभावेन चोभयोः।

अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धस्य तत्त्वभावः प्रसीदति ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।१३

whole thing has come into existence is a class of Buddhist philosophers who believe in this theory. They are nihilists (*sunyavadi*). And all nihilistic thinkers can be classified under that head. Nihilists believe that this whole phenomenal world has come into existence out of nothing. But those who hold such thoughts, will not be able to realize the Absolute because the Absolute is the Existence (*sat*). It is not nothingness (*sunyata*), as the Buddhists maintain, but it is something. It is *suchness* or *thatness* (*tathata*). There are four different classes or schools of Buddhist philosophers.⁵ One class believes in this idea that the whole universe has come into existence out of nothing, and in order to refute such ideas it was said that those who hold the thought that the Brahman exists, will realize it as existent something, or as existent Being, and to them the Brahman reveals its true nature, and not to those who deny its existence. So, in order to attain to the realization, first of all we must

⁵ There are two main *yanas* (vehicles—doctrinal paths) of the Buddhists, *Hinayana* and *Mahayana*. The proper name of the *Mahayana* is *Bodhisattvayana*. The *Hinayana* claims generally priority to the *Mahayana*. The Buddhist philosopher Asanga described graphically the distinction between *Hinayana* and *Mahayana* in the first book of his *Mahayana-sutralankara*.

In 2nd-3rd century A.D. we find among the Buddhists three kinds of *yanas*, *Sravakayana*, *Pratyekayana* and *Mahayana*. From these three *yanas* evolved four schools of philosophy: (1) *Sarvastivada* or *Sautrantika*, (2) *Vahyarthabhanga* or *Vaibhashika*, (3) *Vijnanavada* or *Yogachara* and (4) *Sunyavada* (*Madhyamaka*). The Bengali Buddhist author Advayavajra (12th century A.D.) has explained these four schools in his celebrated book *Tattvaratnavali*. The *Vaibhashika* school has explained in their books the two *yanas*, *Pratyeka* and *Sravaka*. The *Mahayana* is again of two kinds, *Paramitayana* and *Mantrayana*. Among these two classes the first has been explained either by the theories of *Sautrantika*, *Yogachara* or *Mahayana*, and the second *Mantrayana* by the theories of *Yogachara* and *Madhyamika*.

Again among the two *Paramitas*, *Mantrayana* commences with the theories of *sunyavada* and *vijnanavada*. There was also a great controversy between these two *Vadas* (doctrines) or schools. The *Sunyavada* deals with the doctrine of '*Sunyata*' and Advayavajra says in his *Mahasukhaprakasa* that from the right or correct knowledge of *sunyata* appears *Vija* (seed), from *Vija* develops the idea of *Vimbam* and by the process of *nyasa* and *vinayasa* in *Vimbam* realization of everything comes. That is, a man can achieve knowledge of everything by the correct knowledge of *sunyata*. Therefore, *sunyata* does not imply the conception of *naught* or *nothingness*, but it implies something that *exists*. But Nagarjuna expounds the doctrine of *Sunyavada* in a quite different way—in a nihilistic system. His *Madhyamika* philosophy propagates the doctrine of *momentariness* and *nothingness* or void Sankara, the non-dualistic philosopher has refuted this doctrine of *Sunyavada* in his commentaries on the *Upanishads* and the *Brahmasutra*. He has said that the realization or knowledge of *nothingness* presupposes an existence of another knowledge and that means we posit an *existence* of knowledge when we deny something by a knowledge. The nihilistic philosophy is therefore untenable and illogical.

have the consciousness that it exists. Now, how can we gain that consciousness? We gain it simply through our own existence. We ourselves cannot deny our own existence, because we exist, we are, I am, you are, and he is. We cannot deny this. Now we are sitting here, can we deny that? No, because we exist here. So we cannot deny our existence. If we deny our existence then we do not exist, consequently we can never know our existence. But if we believe in our existence, and if we are conscious of our own existence, then that would be the foundation, and that would be the starting point for our consciousness of the absolute Existence. If I exist, if the chair exists, if the earth exists, if the sun exists, if the moon exists, if all the objects of phenomena exist, then that existence is universal, and is not nothingness. But if we have come out of nothing, we would remain nothing all the time, and then our end would be nothingness. And that which is in the beginning and in the end, is also in the middle state. So, if we were nothing in the beginning and are going to be nothing in the end, then our present state is also nothing, because nothing can never produce something. So, whatever we do with such a belief, we are doing nothing. We may eat, or drink, or sleep, or do our functions, but that is nothing. They have come out of nothing and are going back to nothing; so all these works and duties are useless and absolute waste of time and energy. But if these things which we are performing at the present moment, exist, then they existed before, or they have come out from the existence, they will continue to remain in some form or other, and will be called existent. Otherwise everything will be reduced to nothingness. So that would be the starting point, if we try to understand our own existence *per se* as it is in reality, then we shall be able to understand the absolute Existence.

But where lies our existence? Is it in the body? No, it does not exist in the body. When we sleep, we are not conscious of the body, but still we exist. When we dream, we are not conscious of the body, still we exist. Now that existence is not on account of the body, but that existence is reflected through the body. In fact, our own existence or the existence of the soul makes the body appear as existing, otherwise it would not exist. Ordinary materialistic thinkers say that the

soul exists because of the body, and that the soul is produced by the body ; but they put the cart before the horse, and, consequently, they can never come to a satisfactory conclusion. The body does not produce consciousness of existence, but the consciousness of existence makes the body live and move, and that would be the right thinking. So by right thinking we will be able to understand that the existence of our soul is the cause of all other existence. In fact, how do we know that the sun exists? It exists, because we exist. If we are non-existent, the sun can never exist for us. How do you know God exists? God exists, because we exist. If we do not exist, God would never exist, and that is the most logical proof that if other things exist, then their existence depends upon our own existence. So we are the starting point, and starting from that knowledge we shall eventually come to the knowledge of the absolute Existence (*Sat*), which is Brahman.

When the sense powers are not active and also the body is not active, sense organs are not active. When the emotional nature is inactive, all emotions cease, all passions and desires do not disturb our mind, our intellectual functions are in abeyance, and our mental faculties do not work, even at that moment we continue to exist as an entity. In the state of the *samadhi*, when everything vanishes away, all external colours and beautiful landscapes and paintings and everything that attract our eye-sight, vanish ; when the beautiful notes of music and all noise cease to produce an impression upon our consciousness, when the sense of touch is latent, when mind does not work, when thoughts are still, when absolute darkness prevails in this phenomenal universe, then the light of the self-effulgent sun of our true Self is visible. It is then perceptible by our innermost nature or innermost ego. Then comes the realization of the absolute Existence. That Existence can never change. It is independent of all external conditions and environments, and, therefore, whether you have body, or conditions favourable or unfavourable that does not make any difference. You continue to exist. Even though the whole world goes against you, still nothing can hurt you, or injure you, or can make you non-existent. And that state is described here: "When all the desires and passions of our heart are removed ; when perfect silence and stillness prevail, then the

mortal becomes immortal".⁶ The mortal enters into the realm of immortality at that time. That is the highest state of Yoga. In that state, Godconsciousness comes. In that state, the *jivatman* commences with the *Paramatman*. Then if we wish to be immortal, we must do this, and we must enter into that supra-mundane realm first by silencing, or by removing all these disturbing elements, by quieting them and making our mind and mental functions remain in absolute silence. It is very difficult to do that, but that can be done. He who has succeeded in doing it, has found the direct proof of immortality or the Absolute. No other proof can be more convincing than that, because the Absolute, as I have already said, is beyond the reach of our senses, sense powers, speech, mind and thought. How can we give any proof or evidence of the Absolute beyond this statement: that It is, and It exists. Because we exist. That is the only proof. If you wish to know further proofs, go beyond the realm of thought, and there you will find the most satisfactory and convincing proof of the Absolute; and those who have attained to that ever-shining state, have become wise ones, and become perfected. Then they are not of this plane; they are not like ordinary mortals, they are immortal.

"When all the knots of desires of our mind are shattered or destroyed in this very life, we enter into the blissful realm of immortality, and this is the golden teachings of Vedanta".⁷ We have a great many knots of desires. Our mind, under present conditions, is all tangled up. We cannot separate one function from another. We are not conscious of our simple nature, we have become so complex, artificial, diplomatic, and mixed up with delusion of error and right discrimination, everything is mixed up. In this state, it is very difficult to

६ । यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।

अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।१४

७ । यदा सर्वे प्रमिद्यन्ते हृदयस्तेह ग्रन्थयः ।

अथ मर्ते याऽमृतो भवति एतावदनुशासनम् ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।१५

Sankara says in his commentary on the *sloka* 2. 3, 14, that mortals become immortal even in this life if they purify their hearts by rubbing out all the dust of desires. Moreover he said:

‘अत्र इहैव प्रदीपनिर्वाणवत् सर्वबन्धनोपशमाद् ब्रह्मसमश्नुते ब्रह्मैव भवतीत्यर्थः’ ।

understand correctly. It is very difficult to separate the spirit from the matter and the matter from the spirit; to separate the ego from the non-ego; to separate the Absolute from the relative, and we are living in that state now. So how can we expect to reach the Absolute right away? We must simplify our own nature, purify our hearts, remove all the knots of desires and passions and earthly ambition. To think that I am this body is one knot; I am this, I am that, I am thin, I am fat, I am dark, I am white, I am beautiful, I am ugly—these are all knots. These are not helpful to the path of realization. The soul must not have such ideas. These are all delusions. The soul is bodyless entirely. It has no body, still it makes mistakes and thinks of itself as one with the body. It thinks through mistake that I am a child; I am a grown up man; I have grey hair; I have black hair. All these are delusions,* and these delusions should cease to disturb the ego. The self-deluded ego thinks that this is my property, this is my wealth, I want to accumulate more wealth; I want to gain this. These are the false knowledge (*mithya-pratyaya*). The soul or true Self never does these things. Some ghost has entered into our being and has taken possession of our heart, and is guiding us in this way, or is forcing us to commit such blunders, and if we can once come out of the influence of this demon then we are safe, then we start right up like a rocket and enter into the realm of infinite Reality.

The notions of conceptions: I am happy, I am unhappy, I am this, I am that—are all knots. These knots must be torn asunder. We should realize that we are the children of the immortal Bliss, and so we cannot have such thoughts and ideas, and cannot also have any passions. Why should we take care of these material bodies? There are some people who are crazy to take care of their bodies, putting little things here and there. But for what purpose they do? They do it for satisfying their minds and desires that they are one with the body, and by taking care of the bodies they are taking care of their souls. But that is not a correct way, because by doing that they are simply encouraging blunders. Of course, by this

* Sankara has called it as *adhyasa* or superimposition, in the *Adhyasabhashya*.

I do not mean that we should neglect our bodies, but we should not make much of them. We should consider the body as an instrument. The soul has taken this body to fulfil a certain purpose, and that is all. It is not the primary thing, but it is secondary. Really the material body is the instrument of the soul, and we must not listen to those teachers who simply keep our minds within the limits of the physical plane and use all methods how to beautify the body, how to make it strong, and this and that. These physical methods are only temporary. They are always contingent. They proceed from ignorance of the true Self, from ignorance of the truth that we are souls and not bodies. The bodies are frail, and they should be looked upon only as instruments or means as I have said before.

Some people think that perfect health is the sign of high spirituality. They are mistaken just the same. But it is true also that a soul which has understood the laws of life and who is obeying the hygienic and other laws of life correctly, will have good health. Sometimes we may do all these things correctly, and still we may have ill health ; and the cause of it is that we are reaping the result of our previous mistakes, and that is all. What we committed in the past, must produce results, and, therefore, we are suffering. When a wise man suffers from ill health, we must not find fault with him. He is reaping the result of his previous mistakes now. The mistakes you committed 10 or 20 years ago, will not cease to produce their results, and those results will come back upon you after 20, 30, 40 years, or some in the next reincarnation. There is no way of stopping it. When the bullet is shot it must go to its destination, and you cannot stop it. But so long as the bullet is within our powers, and is not shot, we can check its course. But when it is once shot, it cannot be checked, and it must take its own course. So, all the works which we have done through mistakes and all the evil thoughts which we have thought out, will produce their evil results. They are shot, and they cease only by producing the results. So we should face them bravely, and accept everything that comes before us. We are the cause of all these things that are happening to us. We must take them bravely, and manfully, and learn the result so as not to commit the same error once again. So when all these knots of the heart (*hridaya-granthis*) are removed, or torn

asunder, or destroyed by the fire of wisdom, or the right knowledge and the right discrimination, then the soul becomes immortal. The Self then reveals its self-shining lustre. This is the teaching of the Ruler of Death (Yama). He describes that the moment one realizes this, and the moment one has transcended all these mental and physical conditions, that very moment that soul has become perfect and immortal even in this life, and by that he has answered the question which the young seeker after Truth asked: "How far the realm of death does extend and who can become immortal." But those who cannot reach that state in this life, but perform good thoughts and good deeds, gradually march by the process of evolution, i.e. march onward toward the goal of the Self-realization. They will enter into the realm of immortality sooner or later. No one will be lost, but each individual soul will gradually become conscious of its immortal nature.

There are various methods of Yoga that are described, and here the Ruler of Death says that those who cannot reach that state of consciousness right away through the Yoga practice, can attain to it, and become immortal. He describes the method of the Raja Yoga, and says that there are various nerves in the system. Among all these hundreds and thousands of nerves and arteries and veins there is one which goes through the brain upward. That one is called the *sushumna*. It goes through the spinal column through the medulla oblongata, and through the brain upward, and that one is the path of the Brahman. That one leads to the highest heaven, as the Yogis conceive. Anyone who can enter that nerve and at the time of death pass out through that nerve i.e. through the middle of the brain, can attain to the Brahman, the highest heaven of the Creator, and there he goes on in his spiritual progress and ultimately reaches the consciousness of the Absolute.⁹ All

⁹ Here the Swami's non-dualistic (*advaita*) standpoint is clear. He says that through the method of Yoga, a Yogi "can attain to the Brahman, the highest heaven of the Creator". In truth, his marching is not stopped there, but "from there he goes in his spiritual progress and ultimately reaches the consciousness of the Absolute". The Swami clearly discriminates the two spiritual methods, *yogic* and *advaitic*. By *yogic* practice one can commune with the ever-effulgent Parama-Siva, seated on the thousand petalled lotus (*sahasrarachakra*), passing gradually through the *sushumna* canal.

other nerves and other doors are for reincarnation.¹⁰ If we cannot enter into that *sushumna* path, we will have to remain in the realm of creation, and, therefore, the Yogis try to awaken that *sushumna* and enter into that path. They draw the breath here (*ajnachakra*), between the eyebrows. At the time of death they withdraw the whole mind from the lower part of the body and all consciousness. They also withdraw from every organ, and concentrate it here, and then gradually let it go upward and pass out. They pass out through the *sushumna*. Those who are practising Raja Yoga, will be able to understand how it can be done, but those who have not advanced far enough will not be able to understand it.

In the Raja Yoga (*Patanjala-darsana*), all these are described. But this is the earliest expression of that practice. Even in the Vedas that practice was advocated from the very ancient times. You see how they knew the physiology and anatomy, and how they discovered this centuries and centuries before Christ, and they practised it. They could withdraw their whole consciousness from every organ, and make those organs stop, and then enter into the highest realm of consciousness. The whole organic system will obey the will-power of such a Yogi, and there are Yogis in India today, who have absolute control over every part of the body. It can be done. I have seen such Yogis who can do that and who have succeeded in withdrawing consciousness from every part of the body at their will. It is not at all an abnormal state, because the Yogis are absolutely sane persons,

१०। शतञ्चैका च हृदयस्य नाड्यस्तासां मूर्ध्ना नमभिनिःसृतैका ।

तयोर्द्धमायन्नमृतत्वमेति, विष्वङ्छन्या तत्क्रमणे भवन्ति ॥

Sankara says "ब्राह्मणो वा सह कालान्तरेण मुख्यममृतत्वमेति—भुक्त्वा

भोगानुपमान् ब्रह्मलोकगतान् * * *

It should be noticed that the text of the *Upanishad* in this connection is '*utkramena bhavanti*'. Sankara comments upon this word as

"वृष्वक् नानाविधगतयः अन्या नाड्य उपक्रमेण उत्क्रमणनिमित्तं भवन्ति संसार-

प्रतिपत्त्यर्था एव भवन्तीत्यर्थः ।" 'उत्क्रमण' means 'coming back' or 'passing to other *lokas* or regions'. In fact, there happens nothing like *vyutthana* or the process of 'coming back' or 'going beyond' of the realized souls. The Swami discussed it also in his book, *True Psychology*. "And truly speaking, there is no longer any *going beyond* the Absolute, or *going down* or *coming back* (*vyutthana*) from the Absolute by one who has realized it '*na sa punaravartate*'."

getting the highest wisdom, and living on the highest plane. They are absolutely moral and spiritual, and are keen in perception and intellect. They can do these things. They can bring their consciousness as well as all the organs and senses under their control. By practising this Yoga, they know how to die. They know what will happen after death, if they pass out through some particular nerve or particular sense organ. They know exactly, and they know also how to stop that. That power is greater than any other power like clairvoyance and clairaudience. But those are abnormal conditions. So gain perfect control over yourself, and bring every inch of your body under your control. That is the thing we should try to acquire, and then enter into the realm of the Absolute through that nerve which goes through the middle of the brain.

The true Self is very small or minute, but it dwells in the hearts of all living creatures. This has been beautifully described in the *Upanishad*. The self within the body is very subtle. It is confined or hidden under different planes of existence. First is the gross physical plane or the physical body; then the sense plane or the sense power; then the mental plane, emotional plane, and intellectual plane. All these planes of happiness, pleasure, joy, etc., are all coverings (*pancha-kosha*) too. All these planes hide and cover the true Self. And as one can take out the pith of a reed by drawing it out from its shell or covering, so one should try to draw out the true Self which is hidden under these sheathes of different layers of existence or *prana*, and when one has learned that method, the essence of the being can be realized.¹¹

This can be learned from a Master who has attained the divine Illumination. The books can go so far as to say what should be done (*'jnāpakam hi shastram'*), but they cannot reveal the Truth. We shall have to learn it from a living teacher, *Guru* or spiritual Master, because we are too gross, and

११। अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषोऽन्तरात्मा सदा जनानां हृदये सन्निविष्टः ।

तं स्वाच्छरीरात् प्रवृहेन्मुञ्जादिवेषीकां धैर्येण ।

तं विद्याच्छुक्रममृतं तं विद्याच्छुक्रममृतमिति ॥—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।१७

Sankara says as regards it "तं शरीराच्छिच्छिन्मन्त्रं विद्यात् विजानीयात्

—शुक्रं शुद्धमं अमृतं ययोक्तं ब्रह्मेति ।

our minds are too much on the material sense plane, and so we cannot understand how this could be done. In the first place, we have no faith in ourselves i.e. we have no self-confidence. We do not believe that there is such a thing as immortal Soul. We do not believe that we are the Soul or the *Atman*, that we are the children of the immortal Bliss. These beliefs should come first. It may take a long time—many generations—many incarnations before we can acquire them. Blessed are they who have attained to such conviction, such faith in themselves, not faith in any outside thing, but the first thing should be faith in our own self—that we exist—that we are souls—that we are spirits—that we are beyond all these material conditions—that we are the children of the immortal Bliss, then start on to realize our true Self. And even then we will be misled. The attractions and temptations of the world are so great that they will drag us again and again on these planes, and we will have to fight hard to conquer our own minds; just as Buddha had to fight hard for six long years after he had renounced everything. He had to fight hard, and then he succeeded. *It is not an easy thing, but yet there is nothing greater than this.* This is the greatest. Do not try to conquer other nations; do not try to conquer your competitors. These competitors do not amount to anything. But conquer your competitor within yourself who is dragging you down to the material plane and keeping you enchained within the realm of phenomena. Find that out. That conquest is the best. The conqueror of the mind is greater than the conqueror of the world; the conqueror of ambition is greater and divine, while the conqueror of the world is a slave of ambition. The one is free, and the other is a slave. The one attains to the highest immortal Bliss, and the other suffers from reactions and loses everything in the end, as Napoleon did.

So millionaires and multi-millionaires do not amount to anything. All those big millionaires who founded the city of San Francisco lost all their beautiful palaces and everything, and they could not protect them.¹² So it is useless to hold wealth and to be vain about it, what do I care for the rest of the world. That boasting for wealth is nothing, and that

¹² It should be noted that this lecture was delivered after the great earthquake in San Francisco.

shows the ignorance and foolishness of the individual. The wise man laughs at it. Those who are trying to acquire more wealth, the wise man laughs at them, because they are chasing the phantoms of hope which never come twice, and even when they do come do not make them happy. Why do we keep our eyes closed? Let us be brave. Let us not be like an ostrich. When an ostrich is frightened, he buries his head in the sand, and he does not want to see anything. Why should we go into that state? That is not healthy. Let us wake up and see things as they are in reality, and face the brute and find out the ways by which we can get out of this condition. Why should we waste our time and energy by doing petty things? They do not amount to anything.

That which is the essence of our being, remember that it is pure, perfect and immortal. Know it to be immortal. There is nothing beyond it. The essence of our soul is immortal, and that can never die. Here ends the teaching of the Ruler of Death. Hearing this wonderful teaching and taking regardfully the instruction from the Ruler of Death, the young seeker after Truth, Nachiketa attained to the consciousness of his immortal Self. He realized the immortal Self, transcended the realm of thoughts, and entered into the superconscious realization, and through the practice of that Yoga, he gained full Godconsciousness, became pure and perfect, became free from change and death, and attained the eternally blissful state. Whosoever will follow his path, will attain to the same goal. Whosoever will realize the Absolute as eternal within his heart, will become immortal in the end, and will transcend the realm of Death (*mrityuloka*).¹³

ॐ सह नावतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं कर्वावहे । तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु
मा विद्विषावहे । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

१३ । मृत्युप्रोक्तां नचिकेतोऽथ लब्धा विद्यामेतां योगविधिश्च कृतस्म ।

ब्रह्माप्राप्तो विरजोऽभूद्बिमृत्युरन्येऽप्येवं यो विदध्यात्ममेव ॥

—कठ उपनिषद् २।३।१८

To conclude the story this last verse has been mentioned—

‘विद्यास्तुत्यर्थोऽयम्याख्यायिकाथोपसंहारः अधुनोच्यते * * योगविधिश्च कृतस्मं
समस्तं सोपकरणं सफलमित्येतद् * * १”

May that which we have studied in these chapters be a food to our souls ; may it enlighten our minds and strengthen our bodies ; may it bring peace and happiness in our souls ; may there be peace between the teacher and the students ; may we not quarrel or find fault with each other. *Peace, Peace, Peace be unto us all.*